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TheHighlander

Thursday Feb 19 2026 | Issue 727

INSIDE: GYMNASTICS CLUB COMING TO HALIBURTON PAGE 11

FREE

Pure devastation

The Harcourt community was left reeling after a Feb. 12 fire ripped through the Kingdon Timber Mart, levelling the building. *Photo courtesy of Jocelyn Donaldson.*

Fire claims Harcourt Timber Mart

By Mike Baker

Mac Gadway was getting ready for dinner around 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 12 when his wife, Nancy, noticed smoke billowing from the nearby Kingdon Timber Mart.

The longtime staple of Harcourt's business community, located at 1004 Chester Cres., burned down last week, taking more than 50 years of history with it. Gadway, whose uncle, Chester Schwandt, founded the original lumber operation shortly after the Second World War, remembers when the building was erected in the early 1970s.

Seeing such a key part of his community's - and family – history go up in smoke has been a tough pill for Gadway to swallow.

"It was sort of devastating to watch it all unfold," Gadway said. His home is located behind the Timber Mart property. Being the first to spot the flames, it was the Gadways who called it in.

"By 6:30 p.m. the roof was completely caved in. It's just hard to imagine it could go that fast," Gadway said. "I started working there when I was a kid… lots of memories. We built the new store in 1972, put an addition on it in 1990. There's a lot of history there."

Highlands East fire chief Chris Baughman said 35 firefighters from three local departments, including Dysart et al and Algonquin Highlands, responded to the blaze. He confirmed the main building, approximately 8,000 sq. ft., was a total loss.

"We were there until 11 a.m. the next morning. Fortunately, the rest of the outbuildings and the lumber weren't touched," Baughman said. "There were no injuries due to the fire, though one firefighter was injured from a slip and fall on the ice. He was treated by paramedics [on scene] and taken to hospital."

Baughman said he contacted the Ontario Fire Marshal but was told they wouldn't be investigating.

"They don't feel it was suspicious and was unintentional," the fire chief said.

Harcourt resident and Dysart Ward 3 coun. Tammy Donaldson said she was at the store a couple of hours before the fire.

"I had just got back home and dropped my stuff off when I came back out [to see it was on fire]. It smoked for so long, then I heard a bunch of pops and that's when the flames really started."

Continued **'Owners'** on page 2

Highlander news

The Kingdon Timber Mart in Harcourt burned down following a fire Feb. 12. *Photo courtesy of Jocelyn Donaldson.* Inset: Co-owner Kevin Dyck confirmed the family intends to rebuild the Harcourt store. *Photo courtesy of Kingdon Timber Mart.*

Owners commit to rebuilding store bought in 2024

Continued from page 1

Her daughter, Jocelyn Donaldson, caught the fire on camera, with flames stretching 20-30 feet in the air. A longtime resident of the area, Jocelyn said it's a major loss to the community.

"The fire took more than lumber and supplies with it. It took the quick stops on the way home. It took the trusted advice you could only get from someone who knows your name and your project," Jocelyn said. "In a small community like ours, Timber Mart wasn't just a store – it was part of our lives.

"To the owners and staff, please know how much you matter to this community. Your hard work built more than a business. You built relationships, trust and connection," she added.

Kevin Dyck, co-owner of Kingdon Timber Mart and vice president of operations, told *The Highlander* his family is committed to rebuilding the store it purchased in 2024.

"We have been investing in that area ever since taking ownership, we had plans to do a big relaunch this year adding new product lines and updating our display area, so this was a real kick [to the gut]," Dyck said.

"We're very much interested in rebuilding there. We don't know what that looks like at this point. Being a commercial rebuild of an older property, we'll have to go through the municipality. But we've already reached out to our head office to get some ideas on a new building plan. We want to get something put together as soon as possible," he added.

Kevin and his dad, Don Dyck, have been back-and-forth to the site from their home base in the Peterborough area several times over the past week. They've met with the store's eight members of staff, who Dyck said will be retained. Some have the capability to work from home, while others have been temporarily transferred to the Kingdon's Timber Mart location in Gooderham.

Dyck hopes to have some level of service back in Harcourt by mid-March. With outbuildings and exterior stock surviving the blaze, he said there's enough there to keep the business going.

"We'll be sending some office trailers up so we can do some of the administrative and sales work out of there. On the building supply side of things, we'll hopefully be up-and-running in the next couple of weeks," Dyck said.

Gadway, who owned the operation for many years before selling in 2009, visited the charred remains of the building Feb. 16. He said it was difficult seeing the business he helped grow over three decades reduced to rubble.

"Pretty tough… Don said to me how sick he feels about all this, we feel it too," Gadway said. "Yes, it's a business at the end of the day. But it's emotional and personal [for us] given all the history."

Dysart et al investigating Haliburton Family Medical Centre odour

Dysart et al is trying to isolate the source of a smell in the lower level of the Haliburton Family Medical Centre.

Centre executive director, and office manager, Kimberley Robinson said they noticed the new smell Jan. 26.

She said the municipality, which owns the building, has been working since then to isolate the issue.

Robinson said a tenant had painted their space, so some of the smell was attributed to that.

"Air quality studies and confirmatory mold tests have been completed as ordered by the municipality. We are waiting on those reports," Robinson said.

She added there is no visible mold, or noticeable mold smells, after drywall was removed in two locations.

Robinson said with the building location, they often get sulphur smells from the earth and through vents. "This has been ongoing for years and never deemed of any harm, although an unpleasant odour. Many steps have been taken and tests performed by the municipality to remediate this issue and further work is planned."

Dysart et al CAO Tamara Wilbee said Robinson had summarized the situation well and she had little to add, other than, "we are continuing to work towards determining the ultimate source of the odour and eliminating it, but we'll reach out when we know more." *(Lisa Gervais)*

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Highlands East talks needs versus wants

By Lisa Gervais

Coun. Cam McKenzie is wondering what would happen to a new municipal office if there was an amalgamation. *Photo by Lisa Gervais.*

Taxpayers got their first glimpse of Highlands East's draft budget Feb. 17 – so far looking at a 5.96 per cent municipal tax rate increase.

CAO and treasurer, Brittany McCaw, said it represented an overall increase from the 2025 budget of $477,666.

For homeowners, it means about a $34.95 increase per $100,000 of assessment, and does not include County of Haliburton and school board taxes.

A one per cent tax rate increase in the municipality is equivalent to just under $80,000.

This week's meeting followed a Jan. 29 special gathering of council, in which the fate of a new municipal office building, and the extent of work on Lewis Road were hot topics.

McCaw, and senior staff, provided department overviews and capital forecasting at the meeting.

McCaw told councillors the information was a road map for some of the big projects the municipality has coming up this year.

"It's an important opportunity for us to be able to take a step back; we look wholistically at the needs of Highlands East and then we're able to chart a clear and responsible path forward for infrastructure, as well as our long-term investments."

McCaw added the blueprint recognized the reality of aging infrastructure and the municipality's commitment "to ensuring Highlands East remains sustainable, and welcoming for residents and businesses, and visitors alike."

She noted the projects have been developed in consideration of their strategic and asset management plans, roads needs study, bridge inspections, fire master plan, and municipal trails strategy.

> *"We all know times are tough for many households. Municipalities are also not immune to those financial pressures."*
>
> ***- Brittany McCaw***

"We all know times are tough for many households. Municipalities are also not immune to those financial pressures. With this in mind, staff have been working diligently to stretch the dollars we have as far as possible and today our focus isn't wants, but rather needs and investments."

She outlined two capital forecasts based on how extensive work on Lewis Road would be.

Public works manager Perry Kelly said if council went all out, they could do a Lewis Road reconstruction and surface treatment for $650,000. However, they could opt to start the project this year, but not do the full rehabilitation.

Coun. Angela Lewis felt the second option – brushing, ditching, culvert replacement, and putting calcium down - would control the dust, perhaps the number one complaint she is hearing. She said additional money for the project's future could go into reserves.

Coun. Cec Ryall liked the idea. He suggested they could put $50,000 into reserves for future needs on the road.

McCaw broke down the numbers for council. She said doing the full road would mean an increase of $773,059, or 29 per cent, over last year's capital forecast for all departments. A scaled back project would result in a $198,059, or nine per cent increase in capital projects and investments. Adding $50,000 to reserves would make it an 11 per cent jump.

Municipal office

McCaw's administration forecast includes $50,000 from reserves for a new municipal office design, engineering and survey costs.

She said staff have heard council's concerns about the cost of a new build, initially estimated at $2-4 million, then growing to $6-8 million. She said they were looking at things such as reducing the size of the building to bring costs down.

Ryall said he believes they need a new municipal office, but for him to approve it, he requires the spend capped and information on how they are going to pay for it.

"If we have to spend one-quarter-of-a-million on development to find out it's going to cost us $6 million, I'm not going down that road." Lewis agreed the end result cannot be an ask for $9 million, for example.

McCaw said they need design schematics to be able to tender the project to get those costs. Further, without them, she said they cannot go after other sources of funding, such as government grants. She noted they had been putting money into a reserve for years for the project.

Coun. Cam McKenzie raised the prospect of amalgamation in Haliburton County, and whether it was the right time to build.

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Algonquin Highlands council wants to see work begin on the restoration of the Hawk Lake Log Chute this year. *File.*

AH to fix one of County's seven wonders

By Mike Baker

Algonquin Highlands council has instructed staff to do everything it can to ensure a portion of the Hawk Lake Log Chute is rebuilt this year.

At a Feb. 5 meeting, Chris Card, the township's manager of parks, recreation and trails, provided a list of options to council for the restoration, which has been in the works for several years. Engineering firm Tulloch assessed the structure last November – splitting the project into three sections.

The first section, closest to the dam, was said to be in fair condition with approximately 50 per cent requiring repair or replacement. Section two is "non-existent," Card said, with a majority of the structure broken and washed away, requiring a 100 per cent replacement, with section three in poor condition, requiring 80 per cent repair.

"For the most part, any portions that are salvageable are on the floor of the chute and in the foundational structure of the chute," Card said. "It's the wall sections that are most rotted, which is common when you see wood that constantly goes from being dry to wet. The portions that are always wet tend to last longer."

The estimated cost to repair section one is $67,000, replacement of section two is pegged at $155,000, with repairs to section three coming in at $104,000. Card noted a full replacement of the log chute would set the township back $550,000. The township has reserves specifically for chute repairs totalling $276,574.

Mayor Liz Danielsen said, "I would love to see the first section rebuilt. We've got the money in reserves to do that, so it wouldn't create any challenges to the budget."

She was concerned that Parks Canada has plans to move the dam on Hawk Lake, which could necessitate the relocation of the log chute. Card said the federal agency has been non-committal on a timeline for the project, stating it could happen sometime in the next 15 years.

Repairing the first section would extend the structure's lifespan five-to-10 years, Card said. A full replacement carries a 12-15 year lifespan.

"Could we build a structure that lasts 50 years? The first thing [the engineers] said is building the foundation out of steel and everything else out of wood… is a possibility."

Card said it was unlikely a full replacement could be completed this year. Even if everything went right with planning and design, he said it would be late fall before work could begin on the first section. To speed up the process, council agreed to single source the project – meaning it wouldn't need to go through the municipality's usual tender process, instead choosing one company to lead the project. Card said he's in talks with the company that completed the most recent repairs to the log chute.

Danielsen felt this was an important project – both for Algonquin Highlands' heritage and tourism in the County.

"I feel very strongly about the log chute. It is an important cultural asset and we don't have an awful lot of them," she said. "It's unique, it's been named one of the seven wonders of Haliburton County. People love the log chute. If we've got the ability and funds to repair even the first section, we should do it. If we have to fundraise in the future [for the other sections] I'm sure we can do that too."

Deputy mayor Jennifer Dailloux felt it was important that council find a way to balance longevity and authenticity in any rebuild.

"We could put money into a 70-year structure, but it would not look authentic to what was there 100 years ago at all," Dailloux said. "People can spot a fake a million miles away. If it's full of steel with some wood cladding, people are going to think 'oh, well this isn't it at all'. That's not what we're after."

Card said the idea of repairing the first section is to buy the township time to plan a replacement. "It's not about keeping section one in perpetuity, it's to get us through to the point we replace the entire log chute."

Highlander news

COUNTY OF HALIBURTON NEWS

Spending MAT tax money

The County is moving ahead with the creation of a municipal services corporation, which will oversee the spending of money received under the new municipal accommodation tax (MAT).

Director of economic development and tourism, Scott Ovell, at a Feb. 11 meeting, said $175,588.39 of MAT revenue has been generated by member municipalities since the program's inception. Half of that ($87,794.19) will be directed back to the County's municipal services corporation for the purposes of promoting tourism.

Ovell said the paperwork to establish a corporation is finalized. The four mayors will be the initial board members, and are expected to meet this month. There are three at-large positions to come. However, Ovell said that board make-up could change.

Coun. Lisa Schell asked about the discrepancies in MAT tax collected. For example, Dysart et al brought in $33,149.62 with a rate of two per cent, while Minden Hills only collected $6,840.30 charging four per cent.

Ovell said he thinks it has to do with how aggressive staff are with short-term rental hosts when it comes to remittance.

Coun. Murray Fearrey suggested something such as the rail trail would be a great project to fund from the corporation.

Paramedics recognized

Three County of Haliburton paramedics were honoured at the meeting.

Haliburton County Paramedic Service chief Michael Slatter said the three had close to 100 years of combined experience, representing "pretty incredible timing to be in the profession this long."

Chris Barrow started in 1993, and despite going to the City of Kawartha Lakes, he is a part-time County paramedic.

Chris Parish began in 1991 as one of the first emergency medical care attendants in Haliburton County. Slatter said he had served "with distinction" and started the community paramedicine program as a front-line paramedic. He is now commander of the program. He also received a Governor General's emergency medical services exemplary service medal, plus first bar.

Jeff Shultz started as a part-timer in 2000, quickly moving to full-time. He was a volunteer firefighter from 1991-2004, and has been a member of the joint health and safety committee since 2006.

Chris Parish received a long-service award. *File.*

Virtual meetings

County council will meet virtually from Feb. 25-April 8.

CAO Gary Dyke said it's necessary because of renovations at the County office at 11 Newcastle St. in Minden.

He anticipates the April 22 meeting will be held in the newly-renovated council chambers across the road in the former land registry office, at 12 Newcastle St.

Dyke said the project is on schedule and within budget.

Director of public works, Sylvin Cloutier added, "overall, the project is progressing well with no major issues or surprises."

(County of Haliburton news compiled by Lisa Gervais)

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Highlander news

HIGHLANDS EAST NEWS

STR bylaw consideration

Highlands East council, at a Feb. 10 meeting, elected to seek future public input on its short-term rental bylaw.

The move comes after a STR operator, Elizabeth Oakley, wrote council Nov. 18, seeking an assessment of the program after its first year, including public consultation.

CAO Brittany McCaw said "the public has some information they would like to bring forward. They have identified some areas they would like to see improved, refinement of some definitions, applicability, opportunities for streamlining, and an adjustment to the fee structure as appropriate."

Council consensus was to accept written submissions; provide an online and paper survey; hold a hybrid public meeting at the end of March; and do direct outreach to licensed operators.

McCaw said in the interim, it would be business as usual until "there is a change, if a change."

New deputy fire chief

Fire chief Chris Baughman said Marc Jones is joining the township as its deputy fire chief, effective Feb. 17.

"Marc brings extensive experience in emergency services and municipal operations to the municipality," Baughman said. "Marc is a familiar face to many staff members already, from his 12 years with the County of Haliburton, where he most recently served as IT services manager. His strong technical skills will be a valuable asset as our fire department continues to evolve."

In addition to his IT background, Jones has extensive frontline experience. He has served for many years as an OPP auxiliary officer and been an active member of the Dysart et al fire department, where he was a captain. Jones has also been an instructor for the fire recruit course, helping to train and prepare new firefighters.

Baughman also said Mauwgan Woods had been appointed to station 3 Gooderham and Thomas Lambert to station 1 Cardiff.

No more bulk water

Environmental supervisor, Patrick Thompson, said threaded connections have been removed from the Gooderham and Wilberforce public water taps due to people using hoses for bulk water filling.

"These taps remain available to provide safe potable drinking water to residents and visitors who may not otherwise have access. The water systems supplying these taps are not designed to support the withdrawal of large volumes of water on a daily basis while maintaining reliable service to connected businesses and communities," Thompson said.

He added hose connections create a risk of contamination through potential backflow from unregulated containers being filled.

More work on Centre Lake

Planner Chris Jones said proponents seeking an official plan and zoning bylaw amendment for a subdivision on Centre Lake still have work to do.

He said while the applicant's wish to purchase the Crown Reserve remains deferred - and they want the land to abut it instead - three common element blocks are intended to provide lake access to the 33 lots.

He said Highlands East would need assurance that access is feasible, compatible and appropriate in the context of the shoreline, natural features, and lake capacity.

He also doesn't think their plan to use an unopened road allowance can accommodate construction traffic and 33 properties.

He wants the proponent to reach out to Barrick Mining Corporation to ensure the former mining activity in the area is not a problem. The Crowe Valley Conservation Authority has issues around access in a wetland, and want a flood study, Curve Lake First Nation and Hiawatha First Nation want further consultation; and the proponent needs to liaise with the County of Haliburton over peer review issues.

Marc Jones is Highlands East's new deputy fire chief. *File.*

'No' to gun buyback

Council passed a motion objecting to, and declining to take part in, the federal gun buyback program.

Coun. Angela Lewis led the charge. She said the program will force legal gun owners to surrender or deactivate their previously legal guns to authorities by Oct. 20, 2026 to avoid criminal liability.

Lewis said she felt the program was targeting licensed, vetted gunowners who have complied with the rules, and it was a misguided attempt to give an illusion to Canadians that the federal government is making our cities, municipalities and communities safer. She added it does not address illegal guns being smuggled into Canada from the U.S., gang shootings, drug trafficking, home invasions, or repeat offenders.

"These legal, licensed gunowners live in our communities. They are hunters, farmers, sport shooters, gun collectors. We are a rural municipality with many generations of hunters who are licensed and vetted gun owners.

"We are asking the federal government to redirect taxpayers' money from demonizing law-abiding licensed gun owners as criminals, and focus on getting criminals with illegal guns off our streets and in jail."

(Highlands East news compiled by Lisa Gervais)

MINDEN HILLS NEWS

Fewer garbage bags

Minden Hills council, at its Feb. 12 meeting, supported a recommendation by manager of waste facilities, Chelsea Cosh, to reduce the annual garbage bag allotment per household to 104, from 156. The reduction would be to two garbage bags a week.

She said the intent was to encourage waste diversion and recycling, ensure sustainable use of landfill capacity, and align with current waste management practices.

The township offers several waste diversion and recycling programs, such as textile recycling, a Reuse Centre, and a new enhanced blue box recycling program. Most recently, council endorsed a new organics program.

"These programs allow residents to divert these recyclable and reusable materials from household garbage, keeping these materials out of the landfill." She further noted studies and audits indicate 30-40 per cent of household garbage consists of organics materials.

Cosh added the proposed allotment is considered reasonable for household needs and aligns with practices in other Ontario municipalities.

Deputy mayor Lisa Schell said her household of three uses less than half a card in a year, and asked if any households used a full card.

Cosh said very few people are using their entire card.

New cards will be issued for July 1.

Township gets ice storm money

The Ontario government's Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance program has informed Minden Hills township staff they will get $317,016.05 from last spring's devastating ice storm.

CAO Cynthia Fletcher said the township had to return a transfer payment agreement as of Feb. 13.

In total, the township estimated it spent $407,884.99 on last year's storm.

Council endorsed the remaining incremental costs be funded from the 2025 surplus.

(Minden Hills news compiled by Lisa Gervais)

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Editorial opinion

TheHighlander
Published by The Highlander Newspaper Limited

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To tell the story of Haliburton County each week.

To be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas.

To report on issues, people and events important to the community.

To reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of The Highlands.

To encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day.

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Audited Circulation 8,871 (Jan 1 - June 30, 2017)
Canadian Media Circulation Audit - Canadian Community Newspapers Association

We acknowledge and appreciate financial assistance from the Government of Canada

Mission accomplished

By Lisa Gervais

The Highlander is once again a finalist, multiple times over, in the Ontario Community Newspapers Association (OCNA) awards.

The top three finalists, and honourable mentions, were made public Feb. 13.

Because *The Highlander* has the highest circulation of any paper in the County, we are in the most competitive category in these awards - for publications with a circulation of 8,001 and more. Most of our competitors, such as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Review, have more than 10,000 readers and are in much larger towns and cities.

So, when we get a nod, we know we are punching above our weight.

To get eight nods, as we did last week, makes us proud.

We are up for best editorial in our paper size. It was for a piece written by yours truly on the Lounge restaurant controversy in Minden. It stressed that people should not jump on social media bandwagons, but trust local newspapers to get to the truth.

I'm also a finalist for best sports photo, after capturing the image of Greg Foster doing a flip at the Minden Whitewater Preserve last summer. He had recently returned from Plattling, Germany, where he had competed in the 2025 ICF Canoe Freestyle World Championships – his first worlds.

Assistant editor, Mike Baker, is a finalist in the education writing category. Last March, he wrote about how the Trillium Lakelands District School Board had doubled up on efforts to enhance student literacy in recent years, with success in Grades 3-6. He localized a regional story by gathering statistics and tracked down a local mom and daughter to personalize the piece.

Baker also got a nod in the environmental category for his coverage of last spring's ice storm. His comprehensive feature touched on breaking news, including how many people were still without power; the municipal response; closures; and tracked down community members who pitched in during the storm cleanup.

Baker also received an honourable mention in the health category for a story on the County's recent success in recruiting family doctors; leading with one of five new physicians to land in cottage county over the previous 18 months.

Former freelance photographer, Justin Belanger, is up for best feature photo. His front-page image of Will Bowyer glass blowing his creative new piece in the glassblowing studio at Haliburton School of Art and Design caught the judges' attention.

Similarly, Belanger is up for best photo layout, produced by Heather Kennedy and David Partridge. It was from a Haliburton County Red Wolves Special Olympians – Haliburton County Huskies bowling event. Belanger captured pure joy on the faces of participants.

The Highlander is also up for best sports section. We had stories on Haliburton's Owen Nicholls off to yet another Canadian competition; our usual stellar job of covering the Huskies; and we remain the County home for Highland Storm minor hockey.

In summer, we covered nominations for the sports hall of fame; a story on local hockey player, Matt Duchene, resigning with the Dallas Stars; and high school sports.

We stay true to our mission statement every edition, "to tell the story of Haliburton County each week; to be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas; to report on issues, people and events important to the community; to reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of the Highlands; to encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day."

First, second and third place winners will be announced during the better newspaper competition and hall of fame awards dinner April 24 in Collingwood.

Other County papers: the *Haliburton County Echo*, and *Minden Times*, are also finalists in their circulation class of 1,500 and under. As I always say this time of year, Highlanders are blessed to have such robust, award-winning, local media. Other places much larger than us do not. Don't take that for granted.

The time is now

By Mike Baker

Last week, I had a really enlightening conversation with Dave Meslin, a renowned political activist and enthusiast who will be speaking at the HHOA fish hatchery Feb. 25.

Invited by the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project, Meslin will discuss how we can generate greater interest in local-level politics with a municipal election on the horizon – slated for Oct. 26 this year.

It's been an age-old debate. Voter turnout has been in the toilet for decades – across all levels of government. But municipal polls have led the way for all the wrong reasons recently.

Last time around, in 2022, the County's four townships averaged a pitiful 26.59 per cent response, with Dysart et al seeing the highest participation at 31.47 per cent and Highlands East the lowest at 21.26 per cent. Algonquin Highlands came in at 28.9 per cent and Minden Hills 24.76 per cent.

In fairness, locals didn't have much to choose from when it came to marking their X. The mayors and deputies in Dysart (Murray Fearrey and Walt McKechnie) and Minden Hills (Bob Carter and Lisa Schell) were acclaimed, with three positions on Highlands East council and two in Algonquin Highlands going uncontested.

In total, there were 12 politicians acclaimed to their position in the County. That's 12 too many if you're asking me.

Meslin, a resident of Grey Highlands, launched a grassroots effort to boost the number of candidates in his rural area four years ago. Volunteers put together a mailout, explaining to folks how the municipal election process works, why they should consider running and how to get their names on the ballot. They held public meetings encouraging people to stand.

The municipality went from having 12 people vying for seven spots in 2018 to 23 in 2022 – including three-way contests for mayor and deputy.

We know already that at least one sitting mayor will not be seeking re-election this fall, with Fearrey telling *The Highlander* last month he won't be back for another term. We're hearing there could be a contest in Minden, with Carter facing off against Tammy McKelvey, who is wrapping up her first term as councillor at large. There may be others who come to the fore between now and when nominations open May 1 – across all municipalities.

Meslin believes the townships themselves should play a more significant role in finding and recruiting prospective councillors. That can be a dicey game, as staff have strict rules on what they can and cannot do come election time – but better promotion of the positions available and the type of perks on offer could go a long way.

This upcoming election is an important one. Municipalities find themselves at a crossroads given the state of the world – constant downloading from the province of things such as housing, policing, social services and daycare, to go along with an ever-increasing cost of living.

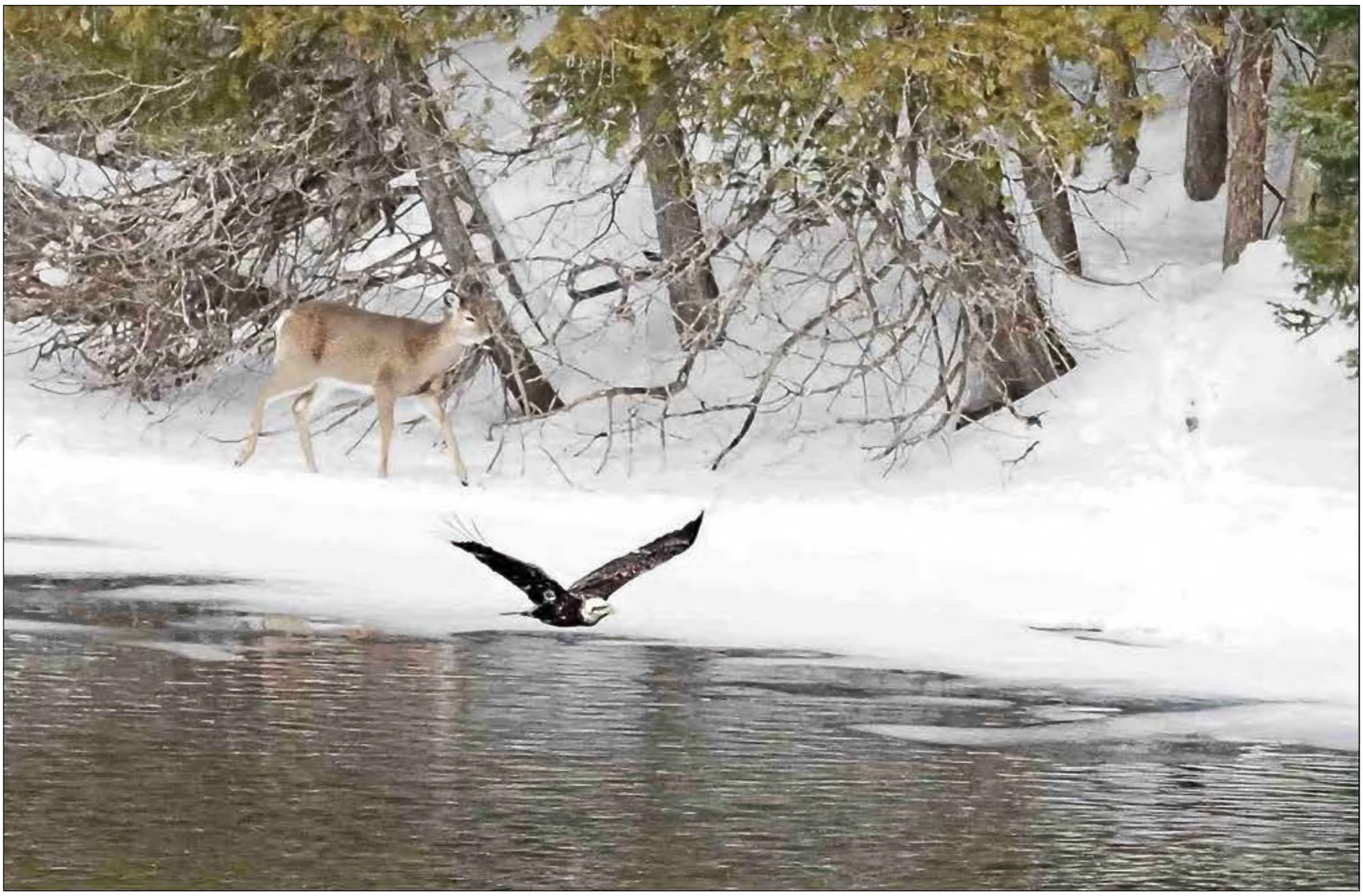
Councils that have finalized their 2026 budgets spoke openly about how difficult the process was. In previous years, elected officials have discussed trimming the fat and tightening the belt. We're at the point now where there's almost nothing left to give. Unless we start cutting services, which would be a bitter pill to swallow considering our tax bills are only going in one direction.

It seems, more than anything, we need strong characters to come forward. People who aren't afraid of ruffling feathers or damaging one-sided relationships with provincial and federal officials who, let's be honest, only direct crumbs our way when it suits them.

If you're contemplating a run, now is the time to prepare yourself. Don't wait until nominations open in the summer. Those serious about getting elected need to be ready to hit the ground running as soon as the clock strikes midnight May 1.

Editorial opinion

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



Fred Pyziak captured both an eagle and a deer traveling side-by-side for a brief moment along the Drag River.

HUMANS OF HALIBURTON HIGHLANDS

'You can count on your people'

By Susan Tromanhauser

In the summer of 1977, pregnant and with her four-year-old son it tow, Doris Nash and her husband left their Massachusetts home for a two-week sojourn in the north. Within two days, she knew the Highlands "was where they're supposed to be." The following spring, the family immigrated to Canada.

As an expert birch bark canoe-maker, Nash's husband was employed by the museum at Camp Kandalore, and Nash set out to make a home of their on-site accommodation with only a wood stove and no running water. Nash told her family they were re-enacting *Little House on the Prairie*. Two years later, with a well finally dug, she phoned her sister in Massachusetts to share the excitement of her toilet flushing.

Six years later, the family moved to their own home near the Frost Centre on Hwy. 35. Nash stayed home looking after the children, and her husband built canoes in his log cabin studio. But Nash wanted more - to be busier and part of the community. So, in 1980, Nash got a serving position at a restaurant in Dorset – and has been serving the people of Dorset ever since.

Nash has "seen it all." She is now serving her third generation of cottagers, explaining to young children she remembers their father when he was their age. She has served people from all over the world as well as celebrities such as Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell. She got to know Shania Twain when she was still Eileen - her birth name -, as the show girls from Deerhurst chose Dorset as their place to hang out.

Nash admits she is outspoken, and at 4' 8", says "I am bigger than I look." When the then-premier of Ontario was enjoying breakfast with his fishing buddies, Nash broke her no politics rule by letting Mike Harris know what she thought of the strike affecting Frost Centre workers.

Nash always knew her community was special but didn't realize just how special until a night in 1994 when a police officer knocked on their door informing Nash and her husband that their 17-year-old daughter, Sarah, had died in a car accident. Within hours, neighbours were in her kitchen looking after the couple until family from Massachusetts arrived. Nash is sure "you would not get personal love like that" in the city. When bad times happen, "you know you can count on your people." The community rallied around Nash again two years ago when her husband of 50 years passed away.

After his passing, her son Erich and his wife moved in with Nash, and using his contracting skills, finished the work on Nash's home, a work in progress for almost half a century. For the first time, Nash has a furnace to heat her home. And, Nash's serving job continues to be her connection to community. At 75, she says she can't retire before her 90-year-old boss does.

Doris Nash. *Submitted.*

Highlander news

Join us at our
OPEN HOUSE
Wine sampling, chef-prepared charcuterie boards, and tours of our available suites
Thursday, February 26th
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Algonquin Highlands is applying for federal money to help fund repairs to Hangar D at Stanhope Municipal Airport. *File.*

ALGONQUIN HIGHLANDS NEWS

Septic solution

After twice failing to find someone to bring on staff to help run Algonquin Highlands' septic reinspection program last year, the township's chief building official, Greg Moore, told council they will have to adjust their expectations for project delivery.

Last September, Moore proposed a renewed program that could be managed in-house based on a five-year cycle – meaning every septic system in the municipality would be assessed every five years. To accomplish that, Moore wanted to hire a dedicated staff member to lead the initiative.

"We went out twice and were unsuccessful… we're going to delay going back out for now. Staff are committed to continuing with council's wishes and will start the program with current staff," Moore said.

"It's going to impact the number of inspections we realize, which will affect the overall cycle. But it's not going to be terrible," he added, saying he'll re-evaluate the situation in 2027.

Moore said without hiring an extra body, inspections would go from every five years to every 10.

Mayor Liz Danielsen said, "I'd hate to see it extended to that degree. I think we'd have to re-evaluate the direction we were going to take if that were the case."

Moore said it would take staff at least one full year of running the program to determine how many properties they could get through annually, with council agreeing to move forward this year as-is and reassess in early 2027.

Oh, Christmas tree

After putting a survey to Dorset residents last year, asking if they'd prefer the township to utilize an existing tree within Dorset Lions Centennial Park for Christmas festivities, or plant a new one, council opted to move forward with both options last week.

Chris Card, the township's parks, recreation and trails manager said 35 people responded to the survey, with 23 suggesting the township utilize an existing tree and 12 in favour of planting a new one. The tree used for recent lighting ceremonies is considered at the end of its life, Card said.

He said the existing tree is a white pine. "At some point in the future, that tree will also no longer be the best tree and we'll have to move on from that. That's just the nature of using natural-growing trees," Card said.

Council directed the white pine be used for tree lightings in the immediate future, while asking Card to come back with a location for planting a new tree this year.

Airport investment

Public works manager Adam Thorn said the township has an opportunity to apply for provincial funding to help pay for repairs to a damaged hangar at Stanhope Municipal Airport.

Staff have been working on a project to restore Hangar D in 2026, with preliminary estimates pegging repairs at $600,000 to $800,000. Thorn said the township could apply for up to $250,000 through the Rural Ontario Development program (ROD).

He intends to bring an update on the redevelopment plan to council's budget deliberations, set for Feb. 23-24. Thorn said Hangar D used to generate regular revenue for the township, but due to its condition it has sat empty since 2020.

"This is an opportunity to repair an existing building, get somebody back in it and improve revenue at the airport," Thorn said, noting he was "very hopeful" the township would qualify for ROD funding.

Thorn said the municipality also has an opportunity to partner with the Airport Management Council of Ontario, which is establishing an advocacy program designed to help small communities with funding for aviation-related projects.

"It would mean they'll be able to speak on our behalf. It's more voices being heard at the table, which can only be a good thing," Thorn said. Council instructed the public works manager to sign off on the partnership. *(Algonquin Highlands news compiled by Mike Baker).*

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Highlander business

Gymnastics club vaulting into Haliburton

By Mike Baker

Highlands resident Kathy Judson was fed up hearing about people having to leave the County to get their kids into professional gymnastics programming, so she's stepping up to do something about it.

The mom of two has been working since the fall on a business plan for Haliburton Gymnastics. So far, she's secured $100,000 in funding from the Haliburton County Development Corporation (HCDC), gotten sponsorship commitments from several local businesses, received non-profit status and, most recently, found a home base on Industrial Park Road.

"We're at the very initial stages of this. It's one of those things that will be a community project. It cannot just be me; it's going to take a lot of people pitching in to bring this to fruition," Judson told *The Highlander.*

"I've been taking my kids out of town for several years now for sport, so this is something I've always been dreaming up [the idea] and hoping someone else would take on," she added, noting the nearest dedicated gymnastics clubs are in Bancroft, Bracebridge and Peterborough.

The response has been "amazing" since she went public with the idea in early January, with tons of encouragement from excited families. Several businesses have offered support, too, Judson said – with Haliburton Electric sponsoring $10,000 worth of labour and materials and Paradigm Electric pitching in $1,000 cash and $4,000 of in-kind work to help retrofit the building. A half dozen other businesses have also committed support, Judson said.

Kathy Judson is aiming to bring a gymnastics club to Haliburton this summer. *Submitted.*

With approximately 8,000 sq. ft. of space, Judson said there's lots of room to bring a pro-level gymnastics club to life. She's looking to install a spring floor and have beams, bars, trampolines and vault. She's also hoping to install a rock-climbing wall.

Core programming will be aimed towards kids aged three to 14, but Judson also plans to offer adult programming and activities geared towards seniors.

"We can offer yoga classes, fitness classes – so this won't just be a gymnastics club. It will be a space the whole community can use," she said. "The bread and butter of any gymnastics program is recreational programming, but we do anticipate having a competitive team in the future."

There will be job opportunities for youth too, via junior coaching roles. Judson will also be looking for a head coach with experience she can lean on to help build the program.

This won't be a first-time entrepreneurial endeavour for Judson – she has operated gyms in Ottawa and Amherstberg, while also establishing a women's soccer league in the County in 2022. She has 22 years' experience as a coach and fitness instructor.

With the business being a non-profit, her goal isn't to get rich. Instead, she wants to plug what she sees as a major gap in the community and help keep Haliburton residents in the area.

"People living here have to drive at least an hour to get to a good, competitive gym. The idea is to keep our families here, spending money here," she said. "So, not only will this give our kids something to do, keeping them off screens, but it will also help the local economy."

If all goes to plan, she envisions a soft opening in late summer. She's well on her way with fundraising, bringing in just over $28,000 of her $100,000 goal as of Feb. 12.

"My plans for the next few months will be crowdfunding in any way that I can – we're making incredible progress already and the encouragement I've been getting from the community has really helped to drive this," Judson said. "We're well on our way to turning this dream into reality."

Anyone interested in donating can contact haliburtongymnastics@gmail.com.

Volunteer-led Pajama Project gives gift of comfort

By Lisa Gervais

Joy Webster, of the Great South Lake Pajama Project, made a delegation to a recent County of Haliburton meeting.

She told councillors it was a community-based initiative that began in 2023.

"My family has been part of this community for over 30 years. After our cottage burned down, we had to rebuild, working with local contractors and learning more about the challenges faced by residents in the area, especially after the Minden ER closed," she said.

"What struck us most was the number of people in need - both elderly and young - and the challenges faced by those on ODSP (the Ontario Disability Support Program). That experience inspired us to start something meaningful to give back."

Webster noted they are not a registered charity and do not provide funding, programming, or direct services. Their sole focus is the collection and distribution of new pajamas, in all sizes, for the most vulnerable residents in the County.

"We work quietly and respectfully with front-line organizations that already support individuals and families experiencing instability, crisis, or transition. We do not work directly with individuals, and we do not duplicate existing services."

Webster said new pajamas have been provided through organizations connected with: child protection and foster-care placements; emergency and transitional housing; women's and family-violence support services; community food banks and family support centres; emergency services, youth and families in need; and people with accessibility challenges.

"The need in our community is real. According to local health data, about 13 per cent of households in Haliburton County are considered low income, and nearly 40 per cent of renters spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, a key indicator of housing stress. There are also over 3,300 households waiting for community housing in the region."

Webster said hundreds of pairs of pajamas had been collected and distributed reflecting the generosity of the community and the need.

"Pajamas may seem like a small thing, but for someone facing upheaval, they represent comfort, dignity, and care—often at moments of transition or crisis."

What the HALIBURTON PODCAST

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THIS WEEK: Thrown Under the School Bus: Minden Mayor Unplugged

Highlander people

County Of Haliburton

Notice Of Complete Application

Concerning a Proposed Draft Plan of Subdivision
And Common Element Condominium
File No. 46-T-25001 and 46-CE-25001
(Lands of 2463756 Ontario Inc.)

The County of Haliburton has received complete applications for a draft plan of subdivision and condominium and is providing notice in accordance with Section 51 (19.1) and (19.4) of the *Planning Act*.

Location:
The lands subject to the application are described legally as Part of Lots 27 through 31, Concession 8, Part of Lots 27 and 28, Concession 9, and Part of Lot 27, Concessions 10 and 11, in the Geographic Township of Harcourt (Municipality of Dysart et al).

Purpose and Effect of The Applications:
The draft plan of subdivision proposes to create 25 residential and 38 waterfront residential lots (63 lots total), 2 blocks (including a waterfront access block), and a common element condominium roadway.

Appeals:
If a person or public body would otherwise have the ability to appeal the decision of the County of Haliburton but does not make written submissions to the County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision before the approval authority gives or refuses to give approval to the draft plan of subdivision, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

If a person or public body does not make written submissions to The County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision before the County of Haliburton gives or refuses to give approval to the draft plan of subdivision, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

Additional Information and Materials:
Additional information and materials are available electronically upon request. For further information, contact Elizabeth Purcell, Director of Planning (705) 286-1333 x 222, or fax (705) 286-4829 or email at epurcell@haliburtoncounty.ca.

Concurrent Applications:
A concurrent local official plan amendment (File No. D08-OP-2025-001) was refused by the Municipality of Dysart et al Council and is currently subject to an appeal with the Ontario Land Tribunal (File No. OLT-25-000818).

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the County of Haliburton in respect of the proposed plan of subdivision, you must make a written request to Gary Dyke, CAO/Clerk, The County of Haliburton, 11 Newcastle Street, Minden, ON, K0M 2K0.

Key Map

Curling prodigy Owen Nicholls is enjoying another successful season. *Photo submitted.*

Nicholls gets taste of big time curling

By Mike Baker

After years of success dominating high school, university and junior-level curling in Ontario, Haliburton's Owen Nicholls said it was a defining moment for him competing alongside professional players at the 2026 Ontario Tankard last month.

The provincial men's curling championship was held in Elmira Jan. 5-11 and while Nicholls, playing with his 2025-26 junior team, ultimately fell short in the 12-team competition, the experience has left him hungry for more.

As his team's third – the primary strategist who delivers the fifth and sixth stones – Nicholls said he felt pressure heading into the event. Flanked by teammates Tyler MacTavish (skip), Nathan Kim (second) and Nate Thomas (lead), the quartet were the youngest squad to ever qualify for the Tankard, earning their spot by playing their way through open qualifiers in late 2025.

At the event, Nicholls came face-to-face with a major name in Canadian curling – Scott Howard. The son of Canadian Curling Hall of Famer, Glenn Howard, Scott won the 2012 Brier and 2012 World Men's Curling Championship as an alternate on his father's team.

"As a junior curler in Ontario, you look up to guys like the Howards. They've been to the Brier, seen it all and done it all. So, it's pretty cool to be not only face-to-face with him, but actually on the ice and competing against him," Nicholls said.

Facing Howard's team in the C-Event semi-finals, Nicholls was on the wrong end of a 14-7 result, ending their tournament.

"At the halfway mark of the game, we were up 7-3. We had them rattled, but their experience got the best of us in the second half," Nicholls said. "It was such a cool experience playing in that arena. It was packed, fans everywhere – it felt exactly like a national event."

The competition was won by Jayden King and his team out of Tillsonburg, who will now compete at the 2026 Brier, being held in St. John's, Newfoundland Feb. 27 to March 8.

This is Nicholls' first time competing on the men's pro circuit, with the Tankard his third tour event of the season. They won a Tankard qualifier in Simcoe Dec. 14 and, before that, played in the U25 Junior Grand Slam of Curling in Edmonton. Along the way, he's duked it out with Joel Retornaz, a pro player from Italy, and Team Kim, the South Korean national squad.

Dreaming big

After mixing it with some of the sport's biggest names this year, and fairing well, Nicholls said the experience has heightened his desire to, one day, turn pro.

"I've been thinking about my future in curling a lot – I had this moment at the Tankard where it kind of hit me that I was at the event to qualify for the Brier. It had never really set in before," Nicholls said. "To be able to do that at such a young age, I had this moment of realization where it's like 'yes, I am a contender in this sport'.

"I could definitely see myself going pro, hopefully playing in the Brier. It's going to take a few more years of hard work, but this year was definitely an opening of the door for me," he added.

It was heartbreak for Nicholls and his Carleton teammates at the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) provincial championships, played Feb. 6-8, claiming silver at the event. The team had hoped to repeat as champions after winning gold in 2025.

There's still plenty for the young curler to play for, with the Ontario U20 Curling Championships taking place in Waterloo Feb. 25 to March 1. He also competing in mixed doubles at the university level, with teammate Maya Sharpe.

Junior highlanders

Hal High's Darla Searle is organizing a student trip to Italy in 2027. *Photo by Mike Baker.*

Hal High embarking on taste of Italy

By Mike Baker

Hal High teacher Darla Searle says most of her students have heard the idiom 'when in Rome,' but now she's giving some the opportunity to experience it.

Partnering again with EF Education Tours, Searle has organized a 10-day tour of Italy in April 2027.

Up to 50 students will have the chance to take in the wonders of Venice, Florence, Assisi, Capri and Rome on a trip Searle described as "the ultimate vacation." It follows previous excursions she's organized for students to Costa Rica in 2023 and England, France, Switzerland and Germany in 2025.

"Europe seems to be an extremely appealing market," Searle said. "We're going to be spending a few days in each city, so the kids will be able to really immerse themselves in the history and the culture and truly experience what life is like in Italy."

The group will fly into Milan, where they will meet their EF tour director – from there, it will be on to Venice. Students will spend two nights in the floating city, built on a dense network of 118 small islands within the Venetian Lagoon. Guides will lead a walking tour in the morning, with glassblowing demonstration and trip to Burano, famed for lacemaking, also on the agenda.

Days four and five will be spent in Florence – considered the birthplace of the Italian language, opera and the Renaissance, where works of art like Michelangelo's statue of David and Botticelli's The Birth of Venus still reside today.

Following that, there will be sightseeing in Assisi, home to the Basilica of St. Francis, and a trip to Pompeii – once home to a thriving Roman Empire community before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D.

"I'm a history buff, so Pompeii is going to be a big thing for me. Just to be able to see it," Searle said, noting the excavated site offers a snapshot in time of how the Romans lived. "It was buried under 20 feet of volcanic ash… which preserved and protected it from deterioration over the years. Now, you can see the ruins of family villas, ancient temples, mosaics, roads and bathhouses."

After seeing Pompeii, the group will travel across the Bay of Naples to the Isle of Capri before moving on to Rome. In the Italian capital, students will enjoy tours of the famed Colosseum and Roman Forum, panoramic views from Capitoline Hill and a visit to St. Peter's Basilica.

Aside from the culture and history, Searle, who teaches hospitality and tourism at Hal High, said she's most excited about the cuisine.

"I'm such a foodie… on one of the days we'll be doing a food walking tour, getting to try all the Italian staples. I'm not going to want to come back after tasting the food there," she said.

EF representatives will be at the school Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. to provide more details on the trip. Searle said registering for that will score a $200 reduction on the booking price, which she expects to be between $4,500 and $5,000. That covers airfare, hotels, buses, day trips and morning and evening meals.

After seeing how previous trips have helped broaden students' horizons, Searle said traveling at such a young age is worth its weight in gold.

"Some of our kids have never been on a plane before. I never got to travel when I was a kid and, knowing what I do now, my life would be totally different if I had the chance to do something like this when I was a teenager," Searle said. "Traveling changes perspectives. To many, Haliburton County is this huge thing. But our community isn't even 200 years old – on this trip, we'll be seeing places literally thousands of years in the making. There's a whole other world outside of home."

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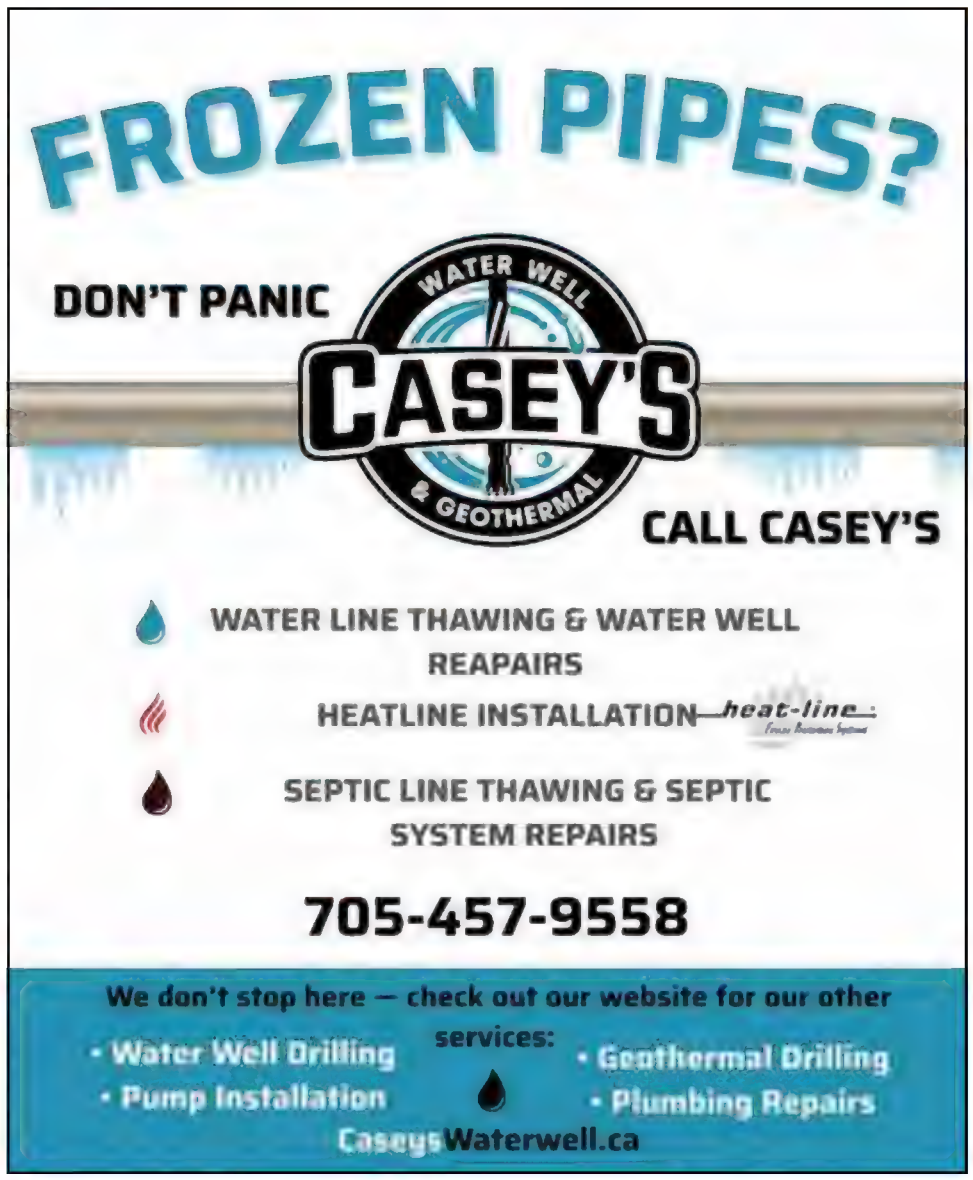
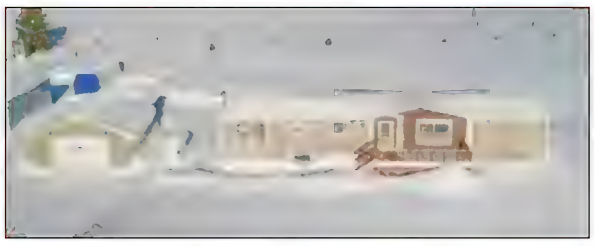
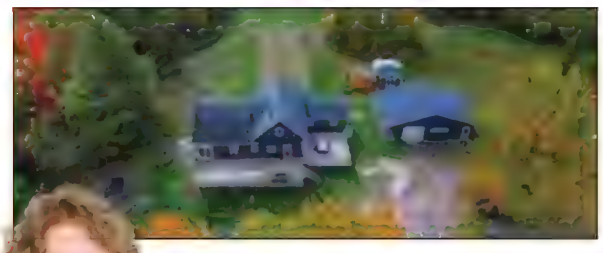


Highlander events

1200 Ritchie Falls Road $469,000



1110 Sedgwick $930,000



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Fun for the whole family

The Minden Hills Cultural Centre (MHCC) welcomed over 100 people during its Family Day open house Feb. 16. There were arts and crafts activities at Nature's Place, with Baz Conlin of Haliburton Micromeadows also on hand, intriguing kids and adults alike with his insect displays. In the cultural centre building, MHCC Foundation volunteers Mary Hamilton and Liz McGowan handed out drinks and desserts, with representatives from Minden Rotary serving complimentary hot dogs and chili.

Top left: Seven-year-old Annalee Hunter poses with a leaf-footed bug. Top right: Elena Dick, three, flashes a smile while painting, flanked by mom Cassia. Bottom left: Louella and Beau Thaler tapped into their creative spirit, encouraged by their mom Sarah Bell. Bottom right: Baz Conlin shows off a display. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

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S.G. NESBITT MEMORIAL ARENA

• Zoo To You will be back during March Break for two shows. Registration is required and opens at 8:00am on Monday February 23rd. Both shows are on Monday March 16th. The first one is 9:00am-10:00am and the second is 10:15am-11:15am.

• Come and join the staff at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena for the PA Day on Friday February 27, 2026. There is a full day PA Day camp for children 4-12 years old, babysitters course for youth 11-15 years old, and drop in Public Skating, Floor Hockey and Basketball.

MINDEN HILLS MUNICIPAL ELECTION

The 2026 Municipal Election is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026 and our website continues to be updated with election information and resources.

Visit www.mindenhills.ca/election for Voter Registration details, Candidate Information, Key Dates and more.

STRATEGIC PLAN – PRIORITIZATION ONLINE SURVEY

Your voice matters in Minden Hills and we need your input. This is your opportunity to share what matters to you as well as helping to guide community priorities for the years to come.

The online survey will be available for input until Friday, February 27, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. Visit our website to link to the survey at www.mindenhills.ca.

Questions? Please email admin@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-1260 ext. 527.

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

• February 26 – Regular Council Meeting
• March 12 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

• A selection of artwork from the Agnes Jamieson Gallery's permanent collection, as well as new acquisitions, is now on display. The Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am – 4 pm. All are welcome. Admission is by donation.

• Join us for the 3rd annual Archie Stouffer Student Art Exhibition from February 21 to March 21 in the Agnes Jamieson Gallery. The student artist reception and awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, February 28 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. All are welcome. Admission is by donation.

• Join the UFO's (UnFinished Objects Craft Group) in the Welch Room on Friday, February 20 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM. All are welcome!

For information on all the programs and exhibits offered at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre: culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or call 705-286-3763.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

Drive according to weather conditions, posted speed limits are usually too fast. Adjust your speed and give yourself extra travel time. Be visible, low-beam headlights are brighter than daytime running lights and they will turn on your taillights.

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Highlander events

Ideal snowball weather

Mother Nature was on her best behaviour Feb. 13-14 as crowds flocked to the annual Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival. Mild weather allowed folks to enjoy Friday night's skating party, followed by a full day of winter fun Saturday. *(Lisa Gervais)*

Above: Town crier Bruce Kruger and great-grandson, Bentley Kruger, walk over the bridge. *Photo by Lisa Gervais.*

2026 Municipal Election

Joint Compliance Audit Committee Members

The Corporations of the Township of Algonquin Highlands, the Township of Minden Hills, the Municipality of Dysart et al and the Municipality of Highlands East, are currently seeking interested applicants from professionals who are required to adhere to codes of standards of their profession, and other individuals with in depth knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* for appointment to a **Joint Compliance Audit Committee.**

The Joint Compliance Audit Committee has full delegation of the authority in the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, to address applications requesting an audit of a candidate's election campaign finances. This authority includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Review applications and grant or reject audit requests
- Where an audit is granted, appoint an auditor and review the audit report
- Where indicated, decide whether legal proceedings shall be commenced.

The Joint Compliance Audit Committee will consist of members appointed by each Council. Committee members must have the ability to understand and apply the election campaign finance provisions of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* and should be considered impartial with respect to their ability to fulfill their responsibilities. Preference shall be given to candidates that have applicable experience in accounting, law, law enforcement and academics from related fields.

Preferred Qualifications:

(a) Accounting and audit – accountants or auditors with experience in preparing or auditing the financial statements of municipal candidates;
(b) Academic – college or university professors with expertise in political science or local government administration;
(c) Legal; and
(d) Other individuals with knowledge of the campaign financing rules of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996.*

Members of the public interested in serving on this Committee are asked to submit a resume, and covering letter, marked "Confidential" no later than Noon on March 6, 2026 to:

Vicki Bull, Clerk
Township of Minden Hills
Box 359, 7- Milne St., Minden, ON K0M 2K0

For further information, please contact Vicki Bull, Clerk by email at admin@mindenhills.ca

We thank all applicants for applying, but only the selected candidates will be contacted. Personal information and supporting material is collected and used in accordance with the ***Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.***

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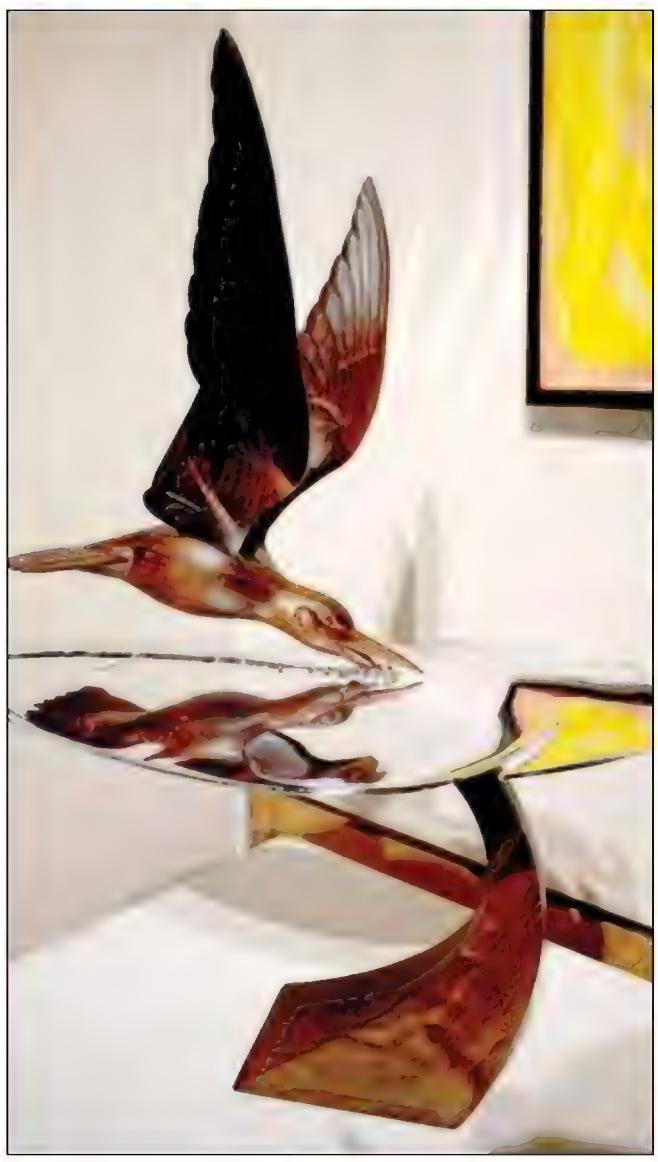
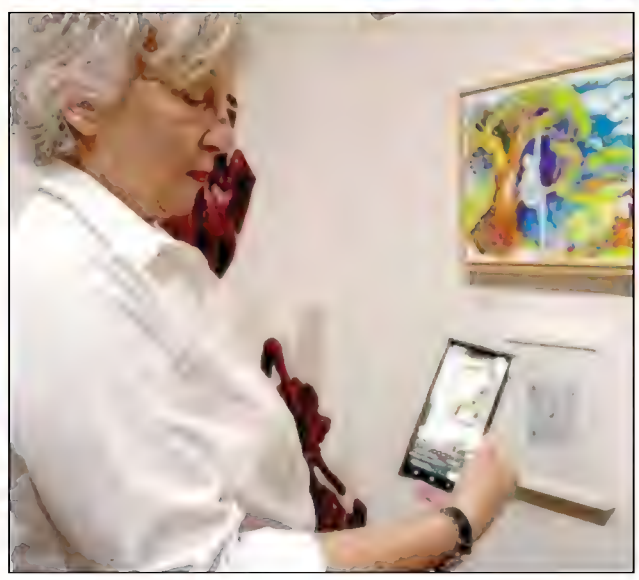




Creative expression and science intersect

The Rails End Gallery and Arts Centre in Haliburton opened its 2026 annual members salon exhibition, Arts and Science, Feb. 14. The show features the work of more than 50 members, exploring the intersection of creative expression and scientific inquiry. It remains on display until April 4. *(Lisa Gervais)*

Top: David Kerr with his oil painting *Nature's Purifier.* Left: Greg Gillespie's sculpture of wood and chrome titled *Ocean Glider.* Middle right: Deb Reed and her grandson, Alistair Keenan, with Reed's entry. Bottom right: Curator Laurie Jones created a reel accessible by a QR code. It has gone viral, with close to 350,000 views. *Photos by Lisa Gervais*

Highlander sports

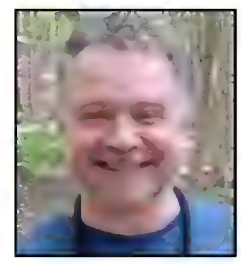
Ice, ice, baby

Ontario Snowmobile Oval Races (OSOR) presented ice oval racing at the Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre Feb. 14-15. The event consisted of the Ontario Formula Championships for Sports F500, Semi Pro F500, Pro F500, Limited Fan 500 and Outlaw 600. It was also the stage for the Ontario Junior Championship, showcasing Junior 120, Junior 206/120, Junior 200, Junior Sports F340, Junior Pro F340 and Junior F500. Racers will be back at the Pinestone Feb. 28-March 1. *(Lisa Gervais)*

Top: Number 12 in the Ontario Junior Championship races around the track. Middle: Racing around a corner. Bottom: #79 heads for the checkered flag. *Photos by Lisa Gervais.*

ADVERTORIAL

Why the Highlands thrives on the edge



By Simon Payn

What if the defining feature of a Highlands landscape is the edge?

We sit here in the Land Between, that biodiverse strip at the very south of the Canadian Shield. It's one big edge where rock meets plains.

Zoom in on our homes and cottages, and you see more edges. There's the edge between the clear land and the forest, and between the shore and the lake. Edges everywhere.

The Land Between is many kilometres wide, and the edges around our cottages are no thin green line either. But we tend to treat them like that.

When the lawn runs down to the lake, that's a line, not an edge. When the forest suddenly ends by your driveway, that too is a line, not an edge. It's a bit like someone used a cookie cutter to carve out the land for your cottage. The lines are clean, but they're not natural.

What if we allowed more dirty edges instead?

The most Highlands way to landscape is to enhance the edges, changing them from lines to fuzzy gradients. That means a continuous flow from shoreline plants to open ground, to woodland plants, to forest. Your cottage then becomes part of the landscape, rather than sitting on a separate stage.

> Your cottage becomes part of the landscape rather than sitting on a separate stage.

Blurred lines

Think about your shoreline. We know how important natural shorelines are for lake health. What "natural" means in this context is a gradient, an edge.

It starts with the water-loving plants already in the lake and then moves inland to where the ground stays saturated, where Cardinal Flower, Joe Pye Weed, Swamp Milkweed, and sedges thrive. And then further up where the soil drains more, there are maybe some shrubs: Winterberry with its red berries in the fall and Red Osier Dogwood with its glorious stems in winter.

By the time you've reached the open ground, you've passed through four plant communities. No lines, just edges.

The result is that water doesn't suddenly end; it fades into the land. That means your cottage sits within a landscape that has its own direction rather than being separate from it. The landscape has its own story, and there's flow from your deck all the way to the lake.

Walk towards the trees, and the same thing happens. A forest edge isn't just a row of trunks; it's a step down.

Maybe you've planted your open ground first with some prairie grasses like Little Bluestem, and some wildflowers like asters, goldenrods, and coneflowers.

Then, as you get closer to the forest, shrubs appear. A serviceberry, some dogwoods - shrubs with loose and layered forms. Further into the forest are shade-loving understory trees such as Pagoda Dogwood and Hobblebush.

As you stand at the cottage, instead of a forest that looks like a fence, you see layers receding into the trees. This makes the cottage feel right—the artificial abrupt transitions are gone, replaced by graduated edges that feel natural.

Ecologists call these transitions ecotones. And it's likely there are more species in these zones than in any other habitat alone. There's a simple explanation for that: species from both adjacent habitats overlap at the boundary, and edge specialist species show up too. It's like getting three communities for the price of two.

An attractive landscape and a biodiverse landscape are one and the same. Instead of a lawn which is static from month to month, a layered edge changes through the day and across the seasons. Grasses sway. Leaves change colour. And birds and butterflies fly between the branches and stems. It seems more alive because it's more interesting to look at. And something more alive feels better to be in.

So let's embrace life on the edge. We're not looking for wild, just a softening of the hard lines. We're looking for flow, and your home becomes part of it all.

Simon Payn helps people blur their edges at Grounded. For more information, visit groundedgardens.ca

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Notice of a Public Meeting
Concerning Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments
Township of Minden Hills

Take Notice that pursuant to Sections 16 and 34 of the *Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990*, as amended, the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills will hold a Public Meeting for both Township initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments, which have application to those lands located within Municipal Well Systems and Municipal Surface Water Systems in the Township of Minden Hills, more specifically being vulnerable areas as identified in the regional Source Protection Plan, within Minden, Lutterworth Pines and Kinmount. Please refer to the key maps below.

Purpose and Effect: The proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments if approved will serve to introduce policies and provisions with respect to Source Water Protection as required under the *Clean Water Act, 2006*. Official Plan policies will identify land use activities that represent drinking water threats and will therefore be prohibited in the absence of a prescribed instrument or Section 59 Notice from the Township's Risk Management Official. Policies will also guide the use of sewage systems, road salt, transport pathways and stormwater management facilities. Zoning By-law regulations will support the Official Plan policies and identify those uses which will require further review and approval within vulnerable areas.

And Take Notice that the Township of Minden Hills will be holding a **Public Meeting**, as required under the Planning Act. The Public Meeting is an opportunity for Council to hear and consider comments related to the proposed amendments. Any member of the public may speak in favour, or opposition to, the proposed amendments during the Public Meeting.

Date and Location of Public Meeting
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2026
Time: 9:00 AM
Location: This will be a hybrid meeting. Members of the public may attend either in person or virtually via Zoom. Details are provided below.

To Watch: Members of the Public wishing to watch the meeting in person can do so by attending the Township Council Chambers, located at 7 Milne Street, Minden. Members of the Public wishing to watch the meeting virtually can do so by joining the **Meeting Live Stream Link available on YouTube:** https://www.youtube.com/@townshipofmindenhills4716

To Participate in Person: Members of the public wishing to participate and make comment or speak at the Public Meeting must: pre-register by emailing admin@mindenhills.ca by **Wednesday, March 11th** before 4:00 PM or by attending and registering the morning of the meeting before 8:30 AM in the **Township Council Chambers, 7 Milne Street, Minden.**

To Participate via Zoom on the Web or by Telephone please email admin@mindenhills.ca by **Wednesday, March 11th** before 4:00 PM to obtain login information. **If attending virtually, please log-on 30 minutes before the meeting.**

Written Submissions either in support of or opposition to the application must be received prior to the Public Meeting and can be submitted to adougherty@mindenhills.ca

Please Note: We encourage those wishing to view the meeting to also download the agenda, as it will not be displayed during the streaming process. **Meeting agendas can be downloaded by visiting the** Township website at: https://www.mindenhills.ca/council/

Please note the live-stream link provided for each meeting will only be activated while Council is in session.

Additional Information regarding the proposed Amendments is available to the public for inspection at the Municipal Office located at 7 Milne Street by appointment and will be available online by visiting www.mindenhills.ca/news/. For more information about this matter, contact the undersigned at adougherty@mindenhills.ca or by phone at 705-286-1260 (ext. 506).

Any Person may attend the public meeting and/or make written or verbal representation either in support of or in opposition to the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments.

If a person or public body would otherwise have an ability to appeal the decision of the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal but the person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Township of Minden Hills before the proposed official plan amendment is adopted or the by-law with respect to the zoning by-law amendment is passed, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision.

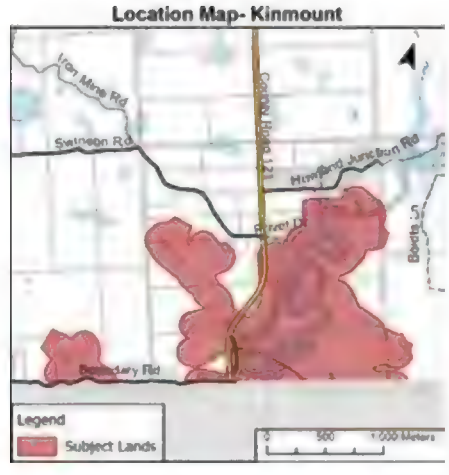
If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to Council of the Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills before the proposed official plan amendment is adopted or the by-law with respect to the zoning by-law amendment is passed, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party.**If You Wish to Be Notified** of the decision of the Township of Minden Hills in respect to the proposed amendments, you must submit a written request to the Township of Minden Hills. For more information about this matter, including information about preserving your appeal rights, contact the undersigned at adougherty@mindenhills.ca

Accessibility: The Township of Minden Hills is committed to providing services as set out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. If you have accessibility needs and require alternative formats or other accommodations, please contact the undersigned.

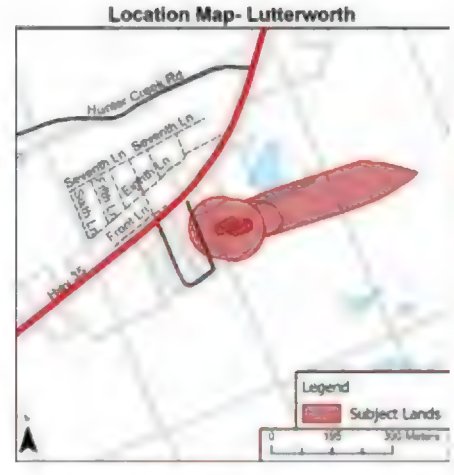
Privacy Disclosure: As one of the purposes of the Planning Act is to provide for planning processes that are open and accessible, all written submissions, documents, correspondence, e-mails or other communications (including your name and address) form part of the public record and may be disclosed/made available by the Township as deemed appropriate, including anyone requesting such information. Please note that by submitting any of this information, you are providing the Township with your consent to use and disclose this information as part of the planning process.

Dated this 18th day of February 2026
Amanda Dougherty, Manager of Planning
Township of Minden Hills
7 Milne Street, P.O. Box 359
Minde

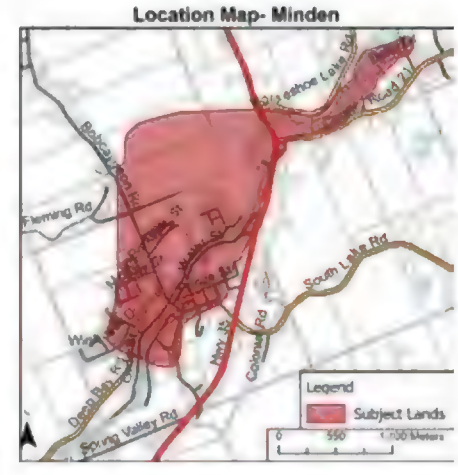
Location Map- Kinmount



Location Map- Lutterworth



Location Map- Minden



Top: The Hal High Red Hawks senior girls' volleyball team won the Kawartha championships on home soil Feb. 12. Bottom left: Addyson Parish with a monstrous spike. Bottom right: Hailey Smith returns the ball. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

Red Hawks soar to volleyball titles

By Mike Baker

Not for the first time in their athletic careers, the Hal High Red Hawks senior girls' volleyball team tasted success on home court in Haliburton Feb. 12, winning a Kawartha championship.

After a dominant regular season where they dropped only one of 14 games, the girls powered through the competition during playoffs last week, securing their spot at the Central Ontario Secondary Schools Association (COSSA) regional finals, being held in Quinte Feb. 26.

The Red Hawks bested Norwood three-sets-to-one in the semi-finals before dispatching Campbellford in the final 3-1. That game was marked by an impressive come-from-behind win in the final set to earn the victory.

Coach Janice Scheffee said the result was the culmination of years of hard work, with most members of the senior team playing together since their first year of high school.

"Most of these girls have played volleyball their entire [student] career, only one player on the team started last season," Scheffee said. "The girls' program has been successful for many years and continues to be competitive in the Kawartha league. This group of players found success two years ago as a junior team, when they won both Kawartha and COSSA titles. Being back together again, the team wants to experience the same success as before."

Scheffee said the squad has been on a winning streak since early January, finishing their last two league tournaments undefeated – getting the better of schools with a much larger player pool to choose from.

With COSSA just a week away, Scheffee said the team's goal is to play in the championship game.

The coach said the success enjoyed this season was a collective effort, with all 10 players contributing at different points of the year. The winning team includes Alivia Brown, Lilly Casey, Lara Gallant, Veronica Heasman, Jordyn Hurd, Delilah Kaytar, Addyson Parish, Hailey Smith, Kaitlyn VanderWieer and Madelyn Walker.

"Volleyball is a true team game, with serving the only individual skill. Everything else requires your teammates and that is how this team plays. Everyone does their job to make the team better," Scheffee said.

"Coach Michelle Backus and myself were particularly impressed with our team's ability [last] week to rally after losing a set in each match. Having had so much success this season, it was great to see that they could pull together as a team and make adjustments to come back stronger," she added.

With the junior team also tasting Kawartha gold, winning its tournament in Campbellford Feb. 12, Scheffee said HHSS is becoming a true force in the sport.

"Volleyball continues to grow in our community. More students are coming in with a higher level of skill than before. We are fortunate to have a strong group of volleyball coaches in both the boys and girls programs who continue to raise the level of play for our teams," Scheffee said.

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Carson Durnin goes for the wraparound in the Huskies 7-2 defeat to the Pickering Panthers Feb. 16. *Photo by Mike Baker.*

Huskies prepare for final stretch as playoffs loom

By Mike Baker

With four games left in the Ontario Junior Hockey League (OJHL) regular season, Haliburton County Huskies coach Jordan Bailey said he's more concerned about getting his team to peak performance levels than plotting their potential playoff path.

After a gruelling run of five games in eight days from Feb. 10-17, where the Huskies won two, lost two and tied one, Bailey said his focus is on getting the most out of upcoming tilts, starting with the Lindsay Muskies on Feb. 20.

The hometown team remains fifth in the East Conference, one point back of the Newmarket Hurricanes in the coveted fourth place that would give the Huskies home ice advantage in the post-season. With only a few games to go, it's a lock that the Huskies will face either the Hurricanes, Pickering Panthers or Wellington Dukes in the opening round.

"Right now, we just need to make sure we're playing good hockey leading into playoffs. No matter who we play, they're all good hockey teams. So, we're never really looking at it thinking about who would be the better match-up," Bailey said. "It's going to be a good series against any of those teams no matter who we draw, so we have to be prepared to give 100 per cent and leave everything on the ice."

The team began its run with a 4-3 defeat to the Newmarket Hurricanes Feb. 10, before rebounding with a resounding 4-1 win over the second-placed Stouffville Spirit Feb. 12.

Isaac Larmand got the Huskies going with a pair of goals in the second period, with Harrison O'Connor adding a third early in the final frame. Stouffville threatened a comeback, notching on the powerplay a couple minutes after O'Connor's tally, but Ryan Fairbairn made sure of the result with a late empty-netter.

Bailey said knocking off one of the OJHL's top teams was a big statement with playoffs around the corner.

"It was very good for us to experience that – we had a full lineup, everyone was healthy and we were able to show that we can compete with any team in our conference," Bailey said. "There's not a team that we can't go toe-to-toe with when we bring our A-game, which was important for our guys to see."

Overcoming adversity

While Bailey hoped the Stouffville result would serve as a springboard to better things, a flu bug floored several Huskies stars in games against the Dukes Feb. 14, Panthers Feb. 16 and North York Rangers Feb. 17.

Despite racing out to a 4-0 lead against Wellington on home ice on Valentine's Day, the Huskies had a tough third period, giving up four straight goals to send the game to overtime. Neither team could find the go-ahead tally, leaving Bailey to rue a missed opportunity.

"It was a great lesson – being up so much, your best bet is always to keep playing your game. We don't need to give teams momentum in moments like that. But we took a bad penalty, then a bounce goes against us and all of a sudden the opposition can smell something," Bailey said. "We have to do a better job of managing those high and low moments, stay even keel as much as possible and stick to our game plan."

Several players tried to play through their sickness against Pickering on Family Day, but it was a rough showing for the home team who were pummeled by the Panthers 7-2.

"We didn't have our best effort… just one we have to learn from as best we can and move forward," Bailey said.

Against North York, the Huskies rostered three young affiliate players, forwards Joe Szarka and Paul Couvillon and goaltender Aaron Neal, who backed up Owen Edwards. The team played short, with 11 forwards in the lineup.

Bailey said it wasn't the Huskies best performance, but he was pleased to come away with a 4-3 win. Goals were scored by Carson Durnin, Easton Poe, Ryan Gosse and Carter Petrie.

With the final Battle of Hwy. 35 of the regular season coming Friday, on the road in Lindsay, Bailey said he expects it to be a tough game with both teams jostling for playoff position.

"They're battling for the eighth seed, so I know they're going to come out firing. We've trying to get home ice advantage too, so we're going to give it everything we've got," he said.

The Huskies host the Markham Royals in Minden Feb. 21. Puck drop is 4 p.m.

Home of the Highland Storm

Left: Eric Mueller eludes a Kawartha Coyotes defender. Right: Austin Latanville stickhandles past the official and heads up ice. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

Under 18 continue playoffs

The Highland Storm U18 A&W Haliburton team hit the ice in Omemee against the Kawartha Coyotes Feb. 15 for game two of their round-robin playoff showdown.

After a hard-fought 2-1 win against the Sturgeon Lake Thunder White team earlier in the week, the group was certain they could maintain the high-energy, disciplined play they started their playoff run with, if they continued to work together as a team.

They knew that coming into the playoffs with a substantially shorter bench than the regular season would be no easy feat, but they were up for the challenge.

Within the first minute of play, Gideon Borgdorff opened the scoring, letting the Coyotes know we came with a job to do. Kawartha reminded us they weren't going to make it easy by tying the game half-way through the first. Thirteen seconds later, Eric Mueller took a pass from Logan Reid to score his first of the game, putting the Storm back in the lead. Before the end of the first period, Mueller broke away and scored his second on a power play, followed by team captain, Austin Latanville, on a pass from Jaxen Casey, reinforcing this team's drive to want to get that "W". Highland Storm ended the period at 4-1, knowing there was still lots of game left to be played.

Kawartha battled back in the second, scoring a few minutes in, making it 4-2. The Storm's defence was challenged, but some smart plays by Ethan DeCarlo and some big saves by goalie, Landyn Simms, helped the Storm keep their lead. Despite all their efforts, Kawartha was able to slip one past Simms to shorten the lead to 4-3. The Storm wasn't done though. Taylor Mulock's heads-up play and passing helped to generate several scoring opportunities. Before it was over, DeCarlo found Borgdorff's stick again, helping him score his second goal of the game, on another power play, increasing the lead to 5-3. A huge backcheck from Ethan Rowe before the end of the second period helped to eliminate another scoring chance for Kawartha.

The Storm came into the third period knowing they needed to keep out of the box if they were going to maintain their lead. Luke Taylor skated hard to get into position, but Kawartha's defence wasn't giving anything up. Brady Hamilton's drive to the net with the puck drew a penalty for Kawartha and ignited another spark for the Storm team to not let up. Layne Robinson helped along the boards with his give-and-go playmaking abilities, getting the puck into position for lots of scoring chances for the Storm to challenge Kawartha's goalie during the final period. The defensive duo of Reid and Mason Latanville worked together to eliminate as many scoring chances as possible, giving Simms and his team the win.

The team will play their first home playoff game Feb. 24 at 8:30 p.m. in Minden. *(Submitted)*

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U18 Rep Haliburton Timber Mart vs Upper York 3-3 T
Feb. 14
U9 Cottage Country Building Supplies vs Kawartha 4-3 W
U9MD Haliburton Hockey Haven vs Lakefield 6-4 W
U13 Casey's Water Well and Geothermal vs Millbrook 3-0 W
U9 Sharp Electric vs Manvers 8-5 L
U11 Rep Tom Prentice & Sons vs Ennismore 6-5 W
U11 Carquest Minden vs Brock 7-3 L
Feb. 15
U9 Sharp Electric vs Millbrook 4-3 W
U18 A&W Haliburton vs Kawartha 5-3 W

STARS of the WEEK

GIDEON BORGDORFF
He contributed two goals to our recent win, and battles hard in front of the net every shift to create scoring opportunities for his team.

ETHAN DECARLO
He played his best game of the season this week, and consistently broke up play after play at the blue line to help his team get their last two wins.

LAYNE ROBINSON
His ability to get the puck to his teammates on the rush has created lots of scoring opportunities for his team.

Photos by Tim Tofflemire

Tim Hortons
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What's on

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION EVENTS

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Office open 9 a.m. to noon, clubroom closed. Bridge at 1 p.m., youth dart league (ages 10-18) 6:20 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Tuesdays: Cadets after school starts at 5 p.m., meeting starts at 6 p.m. Games and cards night starting at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Darts league 7 p.m. start.
Wednesdays: Bid euchre 1 p.m. start, Remembrance Hall. Bingo will resume in the spring.
Thursdays: General meeting third Thursday of the month, March to December; ladies auxiliary meeting last Thursday of the month, February to November.
Fridays: Meat draw, five draws, five prize each draw, first draw at 4:30 p.m., last draw at 6:30 p.m., tickets are $2 per draw; fun darts at 4:30 p.m. onwards; 50/50 draw at 5 p.m., tickets are $1 and available in the clubroom.
Saturdays: Open only for special events
Office hours: Monday 3 to 6 p.m., Tuesday 5 to 9 p.m., Wednesday/Thursday 3 to 6 p.m., Friday 3 to 7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed
Clubroom hours: Monday 3-6 p.m., Tues 5-9 p.m., Wed/Thurs 3-6 p.m., Fri 3-7 p.m., Saturday/Sunday closed.

Royal Canadian Legion - Mabel D. Brannigan Branch 636 Minden

Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Monday to Thursday** with regular menu and daily special including Liver Lovers' **Tuesday**.
Friday Fish & Chips & Wings. Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and dinner 4-7 p.m.
Saturday all day breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541
Weekly activities:
Karaoke: call for dates
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week.
Monday: Euchre 1-3 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1-3 p.m., Darts 7-9 p.m. and euchre 7-9 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 624 Wilberforce

Monday: open 7 to 10 p.m. There's darts Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. Cost is $5 per player.
Tuesday: closed, special events only. Feb. 24 is seniors exercise club at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday: open 2 to 10 p.m. Feb. 25 is darts at 2 p.m. $5/player. There's also quick supper from 5 to 6:30 p.m., with the menu changing weekly. Cost is $10 per person. And open cribbage starts at 6:30 p.m., no need to pre-register.
Thursday: open 2 to 10 p.m. HHHS social rec Feb. 26 at 10 a.m.
Friday: open 2 to 11 p.m. Feb. 20 is fish and chips from 5 to 8 p.m. One piece is $15, two pieces is $20. Feb. 27 is wings and jam session from 5 to 8 p.m. Cost is $15 per pound. Feb. 27 is community care 55+ lunch at noon, cost is $17 per person.
Saturday: open 2 to 9 p.m. Meat draw Feb. 21 and 28 at 3 p.m. Trivia Feb. 28 at 7 p.m., $5 per player.
Sunday: closed, special events only.

EVENTS

Feb. 19, 1 to 3 p.m. Haliburton Highlands Writers and Editors Network meeting at the Minden branch of the Haliburton County Public Library. Gather and meet members, read stories, general news. For more information contact Kay Millard at 705-286-6635. Meetings run the third Thursday of each month.

Feb. 19, 6:30 p.m. Community drum circle at Rails End Gallery. Open to all. Free to members, guests and drop-ins by donation. Come out and experience an endorphin-boosting hour of sound. Taking place every Thursday evening.

Feb. 21, 9 a.m. Ice racing at the Minden Fairgrounds. Admission is free for spectators – come out and watch as dozens of drivers jostle for position on the slick track. Racing also takes place Sunday, Feb. 15 with an 11 a.m. start time.

Feb. 21, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The 49th annual Oxtongue Lake Ice Fishing Pike Derby, in support of the Algonquin Snowmobile Club. Taking place in front of the Blue Spruce Resort at 1215 Oxtongue Lake Rd. Lots of prizes, draws, tasty food and sled show.

Feb. 21, 1 p.m. Celebrate Black history and music with a free community screening of *Sounds & Pressure: Reggae in a Foreign Land* at the Minden Hills library. This documentary explores the journey of Jamaican music icons who brought their sound to Toronto, transforming an unlikely hub into a vibrant centre of Caribbean creativity. All ages welcome, no registration required.

Feb. 21, 2 p.m. Canadian soprano Lauren Margison in concert at Highland Hills United Church in Minden. This genre-spanning recital is in collaboration with Melissa Stephens on piano and will feature classical, jazz and pop favourites. Admission is $20.

Feb. 24, noon to 2 p.m. The Arts Council Haliburton Highlands is participating in the February Folk Festival by offering a literacy round table event 'Verse in Harmony' at Castle Antiques, with performances from three local musicians and readings from three poets. Admission is by donation.

Feb. 25, 7 p.m. Telling Our Stories Speaker Series returns to the HHOA fish hatchery, partnering with the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project to bring author Dave Meslin to town. Meslin will unpack his book *Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy from the Ground Up*. Register for this free event online at tellingourstories.company.site.

Feb. 26, 11 a.m. to noon. Stop by the Highland Grove library for its monthly Savouring Stories event. Each month, attendees explore the fascinating world of food through stories, history, shared experiences and cooking (every second month). No registration required.

Feb. 26. Pasta for playground fundraiser at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School cafeteria. First seating 4:30-6 p.m., and second seating 6-7:30 p.m. All supporters of the Haliburton elementary schools are welcome. The playground is for SBES and JDH. Bring your family, friends and neighbour. Tickets: Adult: $15; kids: $10; add meatballs: $5. Get tickets at haliburtonschoolstore.com

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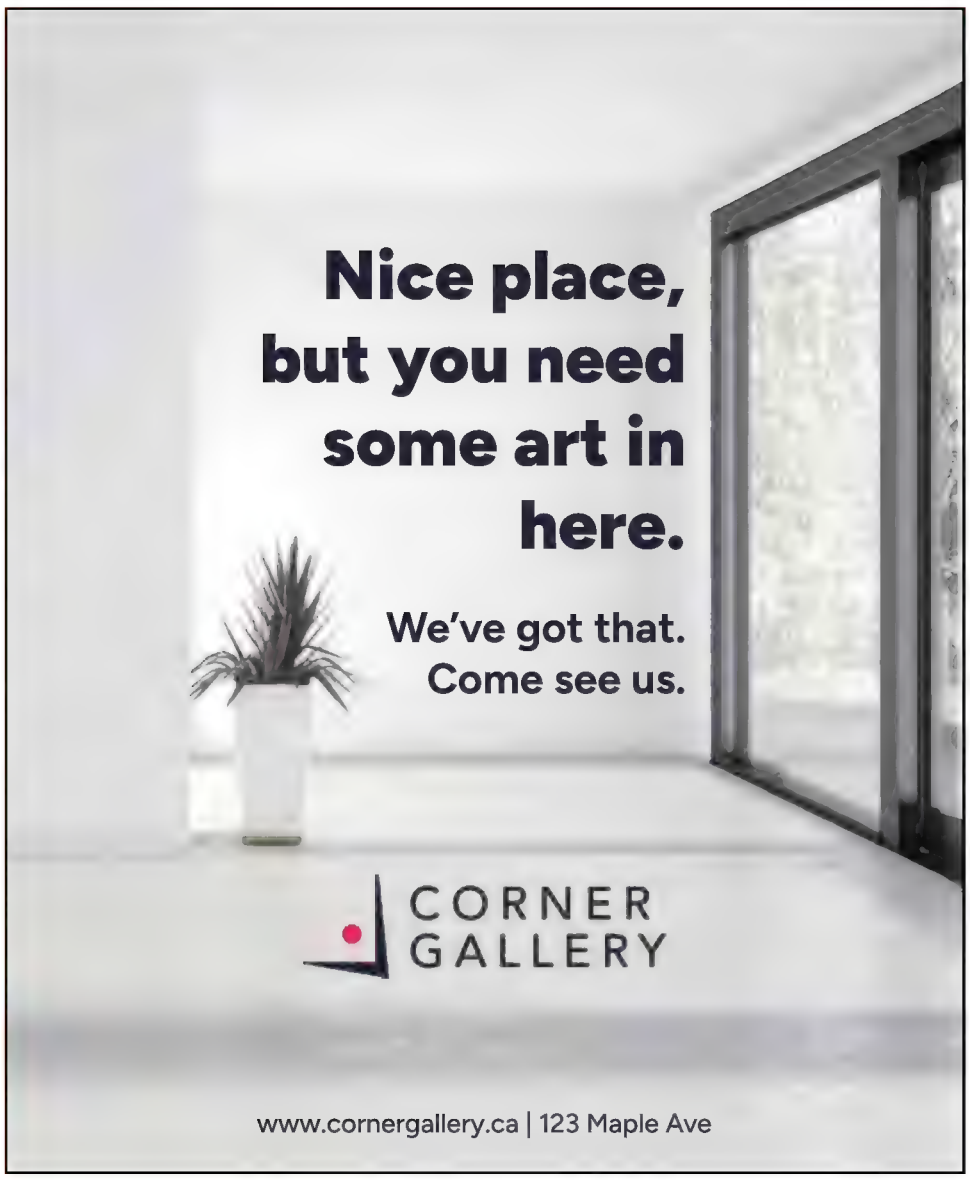

Participation is power in local politics

By Mike Baker

When it comes to generating interest in municipal elections, political activist Dave Meslin has proven all it really takes is effective marketing and communication.

Four years from launching the Grey Highlands Municipal League, a grassroots volunteer organization designed to boost numbers during the township's 2022 election – which he achieved with record results – Meslin will be in Haliburton County next week to explain how he helped double the number of candidates seeking nomination.

"Leading up to all provincial and federal elections, party associations or electoral district associations go out and scout, recruit and nominate a candidate. That's built into the system at those two levels… but there's absolutely nobody doing that at the municipal level," Meslin said.

After years of activism in Toronto, where he successfully lobbied Queens Park to allow municipalities to use ranked ballots, achieved in London in 2018 before premier Doug Ford outlawed them again in 2020; and founding initiatives like City Idol, a 2016 contest aiming to find 100 candidates for election in the GTA (they found 70), Meslin turned his attention to rural politics before the 2022 election.

Dave Meslin is coming to Haliburton Feb. 26 to talk about the important role municipal governance plays in our lives. *Submitted.*

Now based in Eugenia, a hamlet in Grey Highlands, Meslin was perturbed by the municipality's poor showing in the 2018 election, where there were 12 people vying for seven positions.

"I put together the equivalent of an electoral district association, and we actively recruited members from the community to run. It was very successful. While there were a record number of acclamations across Ontario in 2022 (553), including more than 30 full councils, we almost doubled the number of candidates in our community (23 compared to 12)," Meslin said.

The key, he said, was promotion. Meslin's team delivered coloured sheets containing information about the election process and details on each candidate to every household in Grey Highlands. They hosted public sessions over the summer leading up to the fall election.

While he and his team took on that work themselves, Meslin contends it should be the responsibility of municipal staff.

"Clerks will put a black and white ad in the paper telling people the nomination process will begin May 1, but there's no information on what that means. It's not promoted as a job opportunity people can apply for," Meslin said. "I believe municipalities should be doing a much better job promoting councillor positions, what they pay, how people can apply."

To fund this, Meslin believes townships should dedicate a portion of its annual budget towards election costs each year – and make it so that the current council has no say on what to do with those funds.

Generating interest

Asked about record-low turnout four years ago, averaged at 26.59 per cent across the County's four townships, Meslin said it begins with education.

"Politics feels very distant for most people. So we need to create a culture of participation, where people are aware of what a council does. At the federal and provincial level, people have parties they can attach themselves to – and that's why, I think, turnout is higher for those elections. People who don't typically pay attention to local news won't have any idea who is running in municipal elections, so it makes it hard for them to want to participate," Meslin said.

"It's a big leap for most people to go from zero civil literacy to voting or going one step further and putting their name on the ballot. That's not going to happen in one step, but you might be able to encourage people to attend a meeting. Then, at that meeting, you can break everything down," he added.

Meslin said anyone considering a run for local office should be preparing now – getting their policies in place, finding a campaign team and getting promotional materials such as a website, signs and pamphlets ready to go as soon as nominations open. "If you want to win and make a difference, you can't wait until May or June to get started."

He noted municipal politics plays a key role in everyone's life today.

"Municipalities have had so much downloaded to them over the past 30-40 years… people aren't just voting for stop signs and where to drop off their garbage anymore. Municipalities now help form health policies, they run daycares, operate old age homes and some do their own policing. All really important things that impact people every day," Meslin said.

Coming to Haliburton Feb. 25, as part of a joint event hosted by the Telling Our Stories Speaker Series and Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project at the HHOA fish hatchery at 6712 Gelert Rd., Meslin said he'll explain why public participation is power when it comes to local elections.

"If you care about how your community feels, how it operates, how neighbours treat each other, then getting involved in municipal politics is the best way to influence and shape your town," he said.

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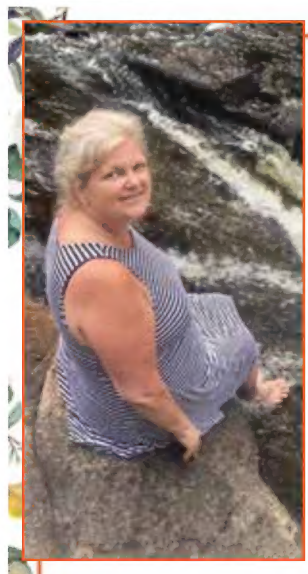

The Family Brown would like to express our deepest gratitude for the outpouring of love and heartfelt support shown to us throughout this difficult journey. We have been truly blessed beyond words by your kindness and compassion. Thank you.

We love you all, just as **Paula** loved everyone she met.

For those who follow Jesus, death is not goodbye, but a homecoming—heaven, peace, and eternal life with Him.**

OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Judy Maxene Carpenter

(nee Harrison)

Passed away peacefully at Hyland Crest Senior Citizens Home, Minden on Monday, February 16, 2026, in her 76th year.

Devoted wife of Albert for 54 years. Dear mother of Angela and her husband Rich Chapple and Scott Carpenter. Loving nanny to Josh Chapple. Dear sister-in-law of Doug (deceased) and Barbara Carpenter, Wanda and Peter Robinson, Ivan and Jean (deceased) Carpenter, Fern and Roger (deceased) Bellwood. Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Judy will be remembered for her artistic flair with her cakes and baking, Judy and Albert will always be remembered for their candy apples at Halloween. Judy loved nature and animals, she had a very kind heart. The family would like to thank the staff at Hyland Crest for the excellent care they provided to Judy.

A Graveside Memorial Service will take place at Twelve Mile Lake Cemetery at a later date in the spring that will be announced.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) or the Highland Hills United Church would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

HELP WANTED

The Municipality of Dysart et al
is recruiting a
Deputy Treasurer

Due to an upcoming retirement, we are seeking applications from experienced and qualified candidates to fulfill the position of Deputy Treasurer.

The complete detailed job description can be viewed through the Municipal website at: www.dysartetal.ca/municipal-government/careers/

We offer a comprehensive benefit program and enrolment in the OMERS pension plan and a competitive salary grid from $80,464 to $94,131 per annum. Expected start date is Monday, May 4, 2026.

Please submit a resume and cover letter, preferably via email, no later than 4:00 pm on Monday February 23, 2026, to the attention of the Human Resources Manager – Municipality of Dysart et al – hr@dysartetal.ca

P.O. Box 389, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0

We thank all of those who apply, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Accommodation for applicants with disabilities will be provided upon request. The Municipality of Dysart et al is an equal opportunity employer. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used only for employment purposes.

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The Municipality of Highlands East
Is Currently Seeking A

Full-Time, Assistant Environmental Operator to fill a vacancy in the Environmental Department

Current Rate of Pay per CUPE Local 4416 Collective Agreement: $31.19/hour

40 Hours per week, Monday – Friday 7:00 am to 3:30 pm
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Reporting to the Environmental Supervisor, the successful candidate will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Municipal water and wastewater facilities, including treatment, distribution and collection systems. Duties will include Operator-in-charge (OIC) designation in accordance with all relevant Municipal, Provincial, and Federal legislation, standards and policies. Perform on-call duties, as required, on a rotational basis.

To apply you must possess:

- Post-Secondary Diploma such as Environmental Technician, or equivalent combination of education/work experience.
- Grade 12 or equivalent.
- Valid Ontario Class "G" Driver's License.
- Minimum Operator-in-Training certification in all four disciplines (Water Treatment, Water Distribution, Wastewater Treatment, Wastewater Collection), would be considered an asset.

A copy of the detailed job posting, and description are available upon request or on the Highlands East website at www.highlandseast.ca

If you are interested in joining our dedicated team of municipal professionals, applications **clearly marked "Application – Full-Time, Assistant Environmental Operator"** may be submitted on or before 12:00 p.m, Thursday, February 26th, 2026 via email, mail, in person, or fax. Interested applicants may submit their resume, including references, in confidence to:

Tracy Vader, HR/Payroll Coordinator
Municipality of Highlands East
P.O. Box 295, 2249 Loop Road
Wilberforce, ON K0L 3C0
E-Mail: humanresources@highlandseast.ca

We thank all applicants for their interest but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The Municipality of Highlands East is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants requiring accommodation are asked to contact the HR/Payroll Coordinator.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the information gathered will be used solely for candidate selection purposes only. Questions about this collection should be directed to Tracy Vader, HR/Payroll Coordinator.

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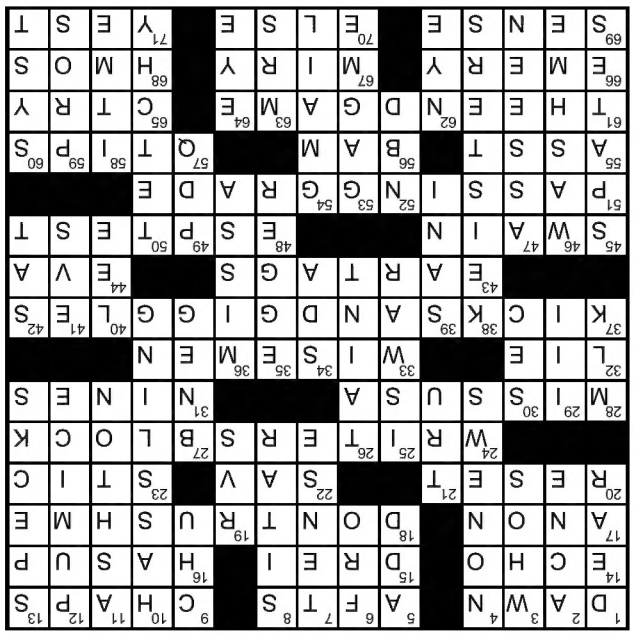
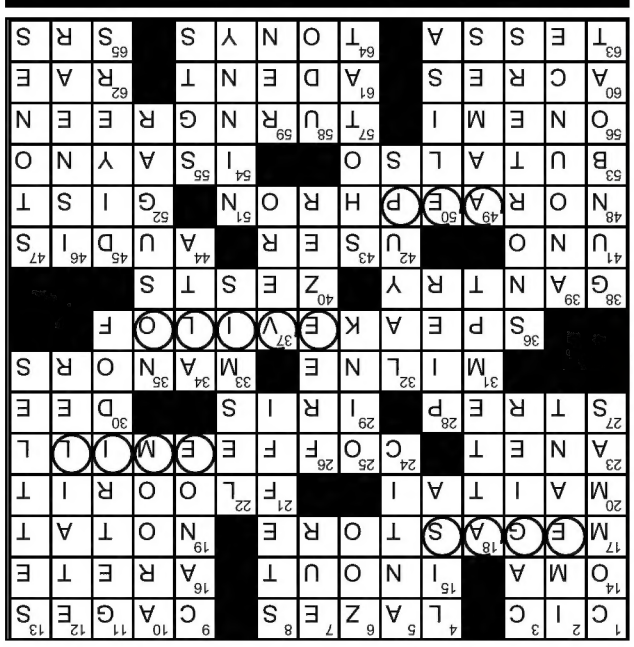
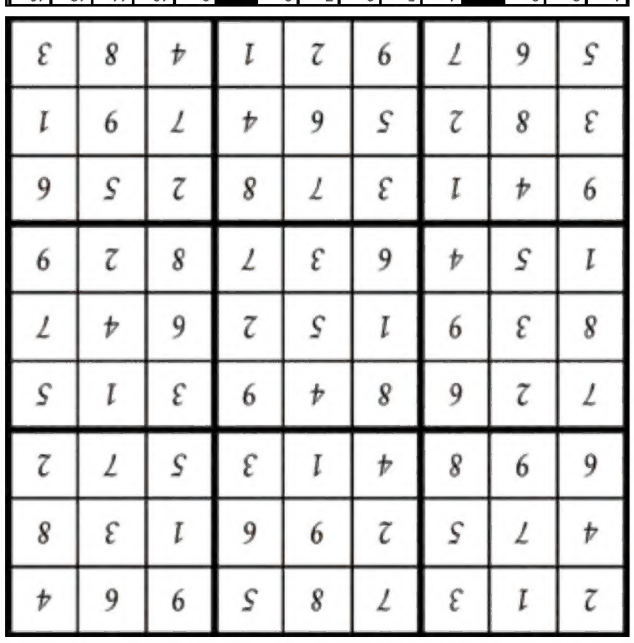


THIS WEEK'S SOLUTIONS





OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Ronald (Ronnie) Jacob Graham

Passed away peacefully at the Haliburton Hospital on Friday, February 13, 2026 surrounded by his family, in his 90th year.

Beloved husband of the late Millie (Dufty), Edna (Lounsbury), Della (Mintz) and survived by his partner Glady (Lawson). Dear father of Wayne (Lou), Randy (Shari), Scott (Mary) and Tanya (Richard) Madill. Loving grandpa of Nicole, Christopher, Jen, Joe, Tyler, Lyndsay, Gage and great grandpa of Simon, Noah, Ocean, Logan, Juliette and Oliver. Dear brother to 5 brothers and 6 sisters. Fondly remembered by his nieces, nephews, family and friends. The family would like to thank the exceptional care from Dr. Lupu and the staff at the Haliburton Hospital.

Friends are invited to visit the family at the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., 127 Bobcaygeon Rd., P.O. Box 427, Minden KoM 2Ko on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 from 11:00 am until the time of the Service to Celebrate Ron's Life at 1:00 pm. Reception to follow in the Monk-Cray Family Centre at the funeral home. Spring Interment at Kinmount Cemetery.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

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In Loving Memory of

Stanley Russell (1956-2026)

Stan was a remarkable man in so many respects: a loving husband and father, deep thinker, outdoorsman, scotch enthusiast, vintage tractor tinkerer, and an incredibly gifted and supportive musical mentor to many throughout the Haliburton Highlands.

Over the course of his career, Stan's artistry reached some of Ontario's finest stages, including National Arts Centre and the Royal Ontario Museum. At the same time, he remained deeply rooted in the local arts community, collaborating with and supporting many musicians and musical projects throughout the Haliburton Area over many years.

Stan lived a truly unique and full life. His connection with his three children was a source of great pride and happiness throughout his life. He was dearly loved by his life partner, Kim, from the moment they met.

Stan will be dearly missed by his family and many friends; his Wife, Kim and children Nicholas & Stephanie, Noelle & Jamieson, Naomi & Hunter and also his grandkids, Inga, Ruby and Flora.

Details for a celebration of life will be shared in the coming weeks.

In lieu of flowers, Memorial Donations to the Dharma Centre of Canada would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario KoM 2Ko.

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HELP WANTED

We're hiring for the season

Grounded is looking for a few people to join its field team this season—casual, on-call work from May through October doing hands-on ecological landscaping.

This suits people who want flexible outdoor work without the commitment of a full-time job, or anyone who just wants to spend time outside doing something physical and useful. We're also open to bringing on a student for more regular hours over the summer.

Pay starts at $22 per hour. If this sounds like you—or someone you know—details are at groundedgardens.ca/hiring.

grounded
GARDENING FOR LIFE

The Corporation of the County of Haliburton
Requires a
Grants & Procurements Coordinator
(18-month contract)

The County of Haliburton is currently accepting applications for a Grants & Procurements Coordinator. This new, vacant position is currently offered as a fixed term 18-month contract.

Reporting to the Deputy Treasurer, this position secures external funding opportunities and ensures compliant and transparent procurement processes. This dual-function role prioritizes responsibilities associated with identifying, securing, and administering grants The successful candidate will have post-secondary education and 4-5 years of experience in a relevant field.

This position includes participation in the OMERS defined benefit pension program and employer paid extended health benefits. The hourly wage range is $36.32 - $42.49.

Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a more detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than **Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 4:30pm**.

We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal opportunity employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

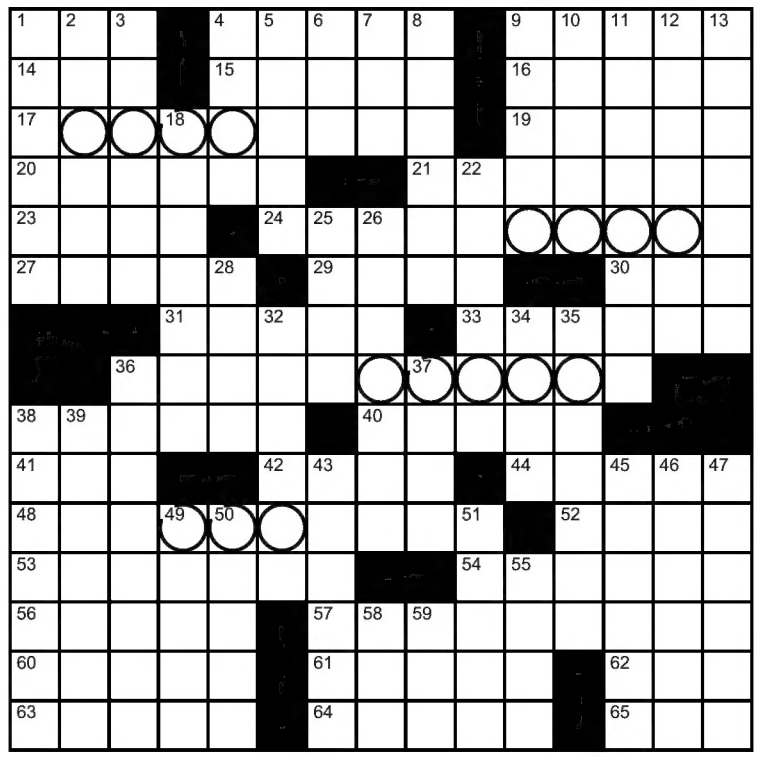
In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,* the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

TheHighlander
2026 HANDBOOK
CONTACT US TODAY!
laurie@thehighlander.ca | dawn@thehighlander.ca
705-457-2900 | 705-306-5015

Highlander puzzles

Sick, Dude!

by Barbara Olson
© ClassiCanadian Crosswords



Across

1 Prez, to the military
4 Takes no action, maybe?
9 Jail cells, to jailbirds
14 Grandma, in Gütersloh
15 Office desk basket
16 Alpine ridge
17 All-in-one shopping venue
19 "___ all" ("It's no trouble")
20 Rhyming rum cocktail
21 "Pedal to the metal!"
23 Work without ___ (act boldly)
24 Barista grinder
27 Throat woe, for short
29 Fleur-de-lys
30 "Family Feud Canada" host Gerry
31 Kanga's creator
33 Lords' lodgings
36 Talk smack about
38 Crane framework
40 Lemon cookie flecks
41 Alex Cuba's opening number?
42 Self-serving friend
44 Cars with a four-ringed logo
48 Writer/director of "Julie & Julia"
52 General idea
53 Words after "Not only that"
54 "We shouldn't, in my opinion"
56 5,280 ft.
57 Show signs of nausea ... or an instruction for solving the circled letters
60 Land parcel units
61 Put ___ in (chip away at)
62 Canada's former U.N. Ambassador Bob ___
63 Virtue of ice dancing
64 22-Down won eight
65 CARP members: Abbr.

Down

1 "Eats, Shoots & Leaves" topic
2 "Let me rephrase that"
3 Likely to outwit
4 Harper-era cabinet minister Raitt
5 Bit of April 1st trickery
6 Animal house?
7 Fifth cont., alphabetically
8 Graf with a racquet
9 Voyageurs' transport
10 Forster novel "___ With a View"
11 Toss in the trash
12 Bricks-and-mortar rival
13 Repays, with "up"
18 Take a stab at
22 "Come to Me (Fantine's Death)" musical, to fans
25 Sty cry, in kid's books
26 Coolest place in the house
28 "Take a walk off a short ___!"
32 Simple baskets
34 Danielle Smith's prov.
35 Keto dieter's coffee request
36 Ones emulating Ernestine of "Laugh-In," say
37 ___ Beach, Fla.
38 Small armed warship
39 Measure of prevention
43 Used for target practice
45 Non-manual workers?
46 Looms, to a doomsayer
47 Skipped beach things
49 Actor Willie of "Eight is Enough"
50 "Paint Your Wagon" song girl
51 Silly goose
55 RCMP Cpl.'s superiors
58 Ginseng kin
59 "Star Wars" warlord Kylo

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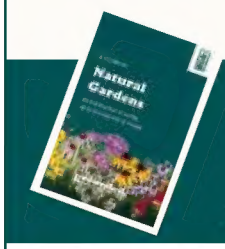
and shorelines
designed and installed



For a free guide to natural gardens in Haliburton County, visit groundedgardens.ca.

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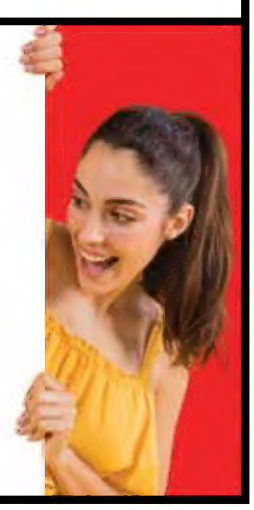
Contact aidan@thehighlander.ca



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